

# The Nation and The Athenæum

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## EVENTS OF THE WEEK

THE week since we last went to press has been marked by an unusual number of events of great importance. The most noteworthy and the most welcome is the conclusion of the Irish Agreement, by which the fiasco of the Boundary Commission has been turned to good account. The clause in the Irish Treaty relating to the revision of the Ulster boundary is to be abrogated. The liability of the Free State to contribute towards our National Debt is cancelled, as also is the British liability for compensation for "malicious damage" during the Black and Tan period. Ulster secures a financial grant from the British Exchequer and the transference to her Parliament of the powers conferred on the Council of Ireland in regard to Northern affairs. The agreement has been acclaimed by British Ministers as bearing the same relation to the Treaty of 1921 as Locarno bears to the Treaty of Versailles. The parallel is hardly just. The Irish Treaty was far more a genuine peace document than the Treaty of Versailles, while the promise of final reconciliation contained in the Locarno Pact is not so apparent in the present agreement. None the less, the example of Locarno has obviously played a part in inducing British Ministers to approach the latest Irish difficulty in a mood of appeasement. The agreement has been promptly ratified by the British and Ulster Parliaments. It is having a far stormier passage in the Dáil, where it is attacked, not unnaturally, as a definite acceptance of the hated principle of partition; and there is always the possibility of an unpleasant surprise. But the Irish outlook is far more hopeful than it has ever been before. As we suggested a fortnight ago, it will be entirely in consonance with the character of the long Anglo-Irish tragi-comedy that a grotesque mischance should help to supply a happy ending.

The remarkable report of the Rumbold Commission on the Greco-Bulgarian dispute is another sign that the League of Nations can be trusted, at least where small nations are concerned, to do even-handed justice irrespective of the relative strength of the parties in

dispute. The report defines the Demirkapol affair as a frontier incident which should easily have been settled on the spot, and acquits both sides of premeditation. On the other hand, it blames the Greek General Staff for too readily accepting unsubstantiated reports of Bulgar aggression, and finds that the occupation of Bulgarian territory by Greek troops was a distinct violation of the Covenant, assessing the total damages at £45,000. For the prevention of such incidents in the future, the Commissioners suggest a resiting of the frontier posts, so that they should never be less than one kilometre apart, and the formation on each side of the frontier of a special body of frontier guards, to which a neutral officer should be attached. If an incident should occur, they suggest that its effect could be localized by the creation of a mixed Conciliation Commission, on which the League should be represented. Finally, they make proposals for hastening the execution of the convention for exchange of populations, and the removal of grievances arising therefrom.

At the sitting of the Council on December 7th the Greek and Bulgarian representatives were invited to comment on the report. Colonel Kalkaff, for Bulgaria, accepted the proposals of the Commissioners with only one or two minor reservations. M. Rendis, for Greece, contended that Greece had acted in legitimate self-defence, and that a measure of coercion, not designed as an act of war, might be reconciled with Articles 12 and 15 of the Covenant. He also argued that the Commission had exceeded its authority, and was not entitled to fix reparations, and indicated that the Greek Government might refer this question to the Hague Court. Sir Austen Chamberlain, who is acting as rapporteur, then proposed an adjournment, to enable the Council to consider the important juridical issue involved. In this, as throughout the whole dispute, the Council has acted wisely. It behoves the Council to act with the utmost promptitude in any steps necessary to avert war; with the utmost discretion in any juridical decision. The jurisprudence of the League will inevitably be built

up on a basis of case law, and it is of the first importance that no decision likely to form a precedent should be hastily arrived at.

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The discussions of the Disarmament Committee of the League of Nations on the preparations to be made for the proposed conference have revealed a strong desire, especially on the part of France, to tackle the problem on the widest possible basis, taking into account not only land, sea, and air armaments, but economic and financial resources and transport facilities. It may be that only on such a basis can the problem finally be solved; but it is obvious that a solution on these lines will not be easily or quickly attained. From President Coolidge's message to Congress he appears somewhat anxious lest the League's proceedings should hold up indefinitely the proposals of a new naval conference. We do not think it should do so. The incipient naval rivalry between the United States and Japan, the political effects of Singapore, and the development of the lighter types, have rendered an extension of the Washington Agreement, to include those types, the most pressing of armament problems. Even an interim agreement on this question would be an immense relief, both financially and politically, and it would assist, rather than impede, the solution of the wider problem. We earnestly trust that no opportunity of removing this special danger will be missed through an unfounded fear of clashing with the inquiries in progress at Geneva.

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M. Loucheur cannot be accused of shirking his financial problem. Last week-end the new Government secured the passage through the Chamber, by a small majority, of the Finance Bill, enabling it to meet by inflation the immediate obligations of the French Treasury. It had seemed for a time as though the Government would fall over this inevitable measure, and it was only saved by M. Briand's prestige and a great oratorical effort. Having survived this first ordeal, M. Loucheur has tabled his proposals for increased taxation, and they are certainly drastic. Wisely, we think, he has eschewed for the most part new expedients, the early yield of which is always disappointing, and has concentrated on heavy increases, all along the line, in the rates of existing taxes. If M. Loucheur carries his proposals in their integrity, France may be nearer the goal of a real equilibrium in the Budget than seemed likely a few weeks ago. But it remains to be seen whether the mentality of Frenchmen has been changed so decidedly by the spectre of the falling franc as to enable M. Loucheur, backed by all M. Briand's prestige, to overcome the vehement opposition which he will unquestionably have to face.

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In Spain, General Primo de Rivera has exchanged the title of Director for that of Prime Minister, and the Directory itself is replaced by a Cabinet in which civilians predominate. Officers holding civilian posts in the provinces are replaced by civil governors. The Government remains, nevertheless, a frank dictatorship. The Cortes is not yet to be summoned; the Press censorship remains in force, though critical comment on the new Cabinet has been permitted; the rights of public meeting and political association are still restricted. This is at least more honest than Signor Mussolini's farcical "normality," with a Parliament from which Opposition deputies are ejected by force; but the *bona fides* of the claim that it is a step towards the restoration of constitutional safeguards remains to be proved. The

King's letter appointing the new Prime Minister forecasts a return to constitutional rule "with the briefest delay possible"; but General de Rivera is now faced with a much harder task than the withdrawal in Morocco. Has he the political ability and experience to carry through the transition from dictatorship to constitutionalism? Or will he find himself in the position of the man who caught a wild boar single-handed—"Yes, I did pretty well to catch him; but I wish someone would help me let him go"?

\* \* \*

We deal elsewhere with Lord Eustace Percy's circular, which has caused a storm in the educational world. A document of equally great importance has been issued during the past week from the Ministry of Health, in which a drastic scheme of poor law reconstruction is outlined for the consideration of the local authorities. The proposed policy contains three important features: (1) the Boards of Guardians are to be abolished, and their main functions are to be transferred to the County Councils or the Borough Councils; (2) in the case of London, the functions of the Guardians are to be transferred, *not* to the Metropolitan borough councils, but to the L.C.C., which is further to exercise "a general responsibility for the administration of the health services in the hands of the metropolitan borough councils"; (3) the system of Grants-in-Aid is to be overhauled, and in place of the present welter of assigned revenues and percentage grants, the Exchequer will contribute a "block grant fixed from time to time for a term of years," and distributed to the local authorities "on a basis of population qualified by a factor representing low ability to pay." The first of these principles was embodied in the Maclean Report and has become part of a generally accepted orthodoxy. There is a great weight of informed opinion against specially elected *ad hoc* authorities, such as the Guardians are, and in favour of the concentration of local powers in the hands of a single authority for each locality. But the other features of the proposed policy are certain to give rise to acrimonious controversy.

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The proposal to make the L.C.C., rather than the borough councils, the responsible organ for poor relief in London is an obvious blow at "Poplarism." The Maclean Report proposed to vest this function in the borough councils, subject to general control by the L.C.C., which was to defray two-thirds of the expense. Obviously the issue is a material one, for the L.C.C. is likely to remain for long a predominantly conservative body, whereas both the Guardians and the borough councils in many districts are very much the reverse. On general grounds there is a good case for Mr. Chamberlain's proposal. Centralization of the control of poor relief is the only ultimately possible corollary to the centralization of its cost, which is now nearly complete in London; and it may be doubted whether the Maclean arrangements would have proved workable in practice. But clearly it will not be an easy or a quiet affair to draw the sting of Poplarism in this way. The principle of the "block grant"—in vain does Sir Amherst Selby-Bigge protest in the interests of nomenclature against using the term as the opposite of a percentage grant—raises a highly controversial issue of a different type. The percentage grant, says one school, encourages uneconomical expenditure; it is the instrument, replies the other, by which Whitehall is able to keep backward and parsimonious authorities up to the mark, and enforce the minimum standards essential in the national interests. Unquestionably there is much truth in both assertions.



The National Wages Board for the Railways has turned down both the "all-grades" programme of the National Union and the companies' claim for a reduction in the base and current rates. This is the decision we anticipated, as any other award would have involved the Board in serious difficulty with the A.S.L.E. & F.—the engine-drivers' union—which was no party to the claim for an advance. It is worth noting, however, that this decision falls into line with the general tendency of industry to maintain for the present the *status quo* with respect to wages and conditions of employment. The National Wages Board is not empowered to deal with the wages of the shopmen, so their claim is being dealt with separately, although it was presented as part of the general case. The pensions claim is also reserved for independent discussion. One minor but important point in the findings of the National Board is that after next January new recruits to the railways will not receive the cost-of-living bonus, but will be paid at the standard base rates of the grades in which they are employed.

\* \* \*

President Coolidge has surprised his great multitude of supporters by the tone of his annual Message to Congress. He made it as formal and non-committal as possible, contenting himself with a mild recommendation on the subject in regard to which he was expected to speak with emphasis—namely, America's entry into the World Court. On debt-collection, the tariff and tax-reduction he was, of course, orthodox, and he made one more appeal, which must have sounded grotesque in Washington, for the strict enforcement of Prohibition. On Disarmament the President said in plain terms what the heads of the State Department have been saying more or less publicly since the Washington Conference of 1922: that the present question is one of land armaments, and therefore a European problem. If and when the armies have been reduced, the United States will be prepared to take part in a conference for the reduction of naval armaments—but, Mr. Coolidge intimated, not in Europe or under the auspices of the League of Nations. Not for many years has a President's message caused so little stir in Congress or provided so slight a basis for discussion in America and in Europe alike.

\* \* \*

To follow the rises and falls of the Chinese Tschuns, and to strive to grasp the inner meaning of their combinations and disintegrations, would be quite as stimulating as reading Guicciardini's history of the republics, principalities, and condottieri governments of Renaissance Italy, were it not that the comedy is being played to an accompaniment which is always pathetic, and often jarring. It is pathetic that nobody seems to care or worry about the suffering which all this inflicts upon the Chinese peasants, the most patient, uncomplaining, and laborious race of men on earth. The jarring note comes from Manchuria; for the apparent collapse of Chang-Tso-ling raises an acute Japanese problem. Japan's interests in Manchuria exceed those of any other Power, because they have not been created simply by high finance and company-promoting. A colonizing movement towards the North-West has carried a number of Japanese farmers into those parts of Manchuria where cereals can be grown and exported. The Japanese Government is naturally much concerned in protecting and encouraging any migratory movement which helps to solve the problem which the European Powers of the Pacific have pressed upon it. The prospect of unsettled conditions in Manchuria must, therefore, cause exceptional anxiety to the Tokyo Cabinet.

Riza Khan Pahlevi, who has overthrown the Shah of Persia, is a lineal successor to the long line of generals, court officials or eunuchs who have played a part in the history of Eastern dynasties. The people of Persia will not feel the change of Government greatly, and as the Shah's throne has never had any religious significance attaching to it, Riza Khan and the Mejliss can find a successor to Ahmad Shah without breaking any rule of Mohammedan public law. It will, however, be extremely interesting to see whether they set up another monarch in his place or not. For centuries, Persian society has been dominated by the Court and by a very powerful landed aristocracy. Neither the clergy nor the traders have had anything like the influence they have always possessed in Arab and Turcoman communities. It is thus hardly surprising that the Third International should have been making special efforts to cast a beam of Soviet light into the country. There is, of course, not the slightest probability that Riza Khan and his supporters will play with Russian theories; but their final choice and the stability of the new Government will be some measure of the influence which the new West is at present exerting over the old East.

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Professor Gilbert Murray sends us a manifesto, signed by a large number of distinguished men and women, which suggests that the "war guilt" and "war criminals" clauses of the Treaty of Versailles should now be dropped. This suggestion originates in France, where a similar manifesto, with eminent French signatories, has appeared in *L'ERE NOUVELLE*. It is undoubtedly in the right spirit, and, unlike some well-intentioned proposals of the kind, it is well-timed and judiciously put forward. The signatories do not press for a revision of the Treaty, which, as Professor Murray says, "is perhaps at present both dangerous and impracticable," but they ask the Governments concerned to announce their intention to disregard the offending clauses. This has actually been done already with respect to certain of the financial provisions of the Treaty, and should not present insuperable difficulties in this case. The British appeal has secured the support of many eminent and representative people. The list is far too long to be given in full, and it would be invidious to select from it. We hope and believe that there will be general sympathy with the object in view. The clauses in question are obviously one-sided and unjust, they were signed under coercion, they serve no useful purpose, and their retention is out of harmony with the Locarno temper.

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The German Government has just solved the difficult and intricate problem of making provision for the Hohenzollerns. The difficulty has not been that of distinguishing between those parts of the State domains which are private, and those parts which are public, property; but in deciding how far the law relating to private property could be applied independently of political considerations. Can ex-Royal Families be allowed to become immensely wealthy owners of urban and country properties, and to enjoy the political advantages which go with them? If the law is applied without modification, that is generally the resulting position. The German Government, it would seem, has made a settlement which goes far beyond what other Republican Governments have thought fit to offer their Royalist predecessors. If the Hohenzollern agreement serves as a model for Bavaria, it will mean that the Wittelsbachs will be allowed to consolidate the extraordinary position they now hold in the country. The surviving Bourbons must be regretting that no branch of their family ever took root in Germany.

## THE PROBLEM OF INHERITANCE

A RICH man who wishes to retain his wealth and to hand it on intact to his heirs, has much more reason to fear Mr. E. D. Simon and Sir Josiah Stamp than all the Communists, in or out of prison, in Britain. Fear, however, is an irrational impulse, and it nearly always diverts the attention of its victim from his real enemy to some comparatively harmless lunatic, and we shall not be surprised therefore if these two dangerous characters are allowed to continue their subversive propaganda, unheeded by the propertied classes, while the advocates of impracticable schemes of nationalization and communism are denounced or arrested.

Mr. E. D. Simon has given what cannot fail to be a great impetus to the discussion of this month's Liberal questionnaire on "The Inheritance of Wealth," by publishing in pamphlet form the paper\* which he read on that subject to the Liberal Summer School last August, following upon that of Professor Clay† in the preceding year. Sir Josiah Stamp, who combines an exceptional knowledge of the technique of taxation with a complete grasp of its theoretical principles, has just introduced to English readers a translation of Rignano's "Social Significance of Death Duties,"‡ a book which facilitates Mr. Simon's project by showing a way in which it might conveniently be carried out. Together, these two, the eloquent advocate and the judicious exponent of methods, make a formidable case.

It is remarkable that so little attention has been given, since the days of Mill, to British laws of bequest and inheritance, and their effect on the distribution of wealth. During a period when social inequalities and economic grievances have formed the main substance of political controversy, inherited wealth, this "determining factor in the social and economic order of our time," as Professor Hobhouse has termed it, has remained almost unchallenged. The extreme Socialist passes it by, as he passes by all remediable evils, as a mere appendage of a system which he wishes to destroy. The more intelligent Socialist may toy with the idea of restricting inheritance, as Dr. Dalton, for instance, has done, but he soon lets it drop in favour of the capital levy or some other unworkable device which apparently carries more popular support in his constituency.

The fundamental position of those who object to any change in the inheritance laws, including such changes as may result from taxation, is not, indeed, based primarily upon economic considerations; nor, for that matter, is the challenge to the existing system by men like Mr. Simon so based. The former claim complete freedom of bequest, or, alternatively, an immutable system of inheritance by the "next-of-kin" as "a natural right"; the latter see in inheritance the root cause of the excessive inequalities of wealth which, they contend, have a disastrous psychological effect upon our social life. How deep the gap is between these two points of view may be gauged by asking Mr. Simon to consider sympathetically the plea of Lord Faber against the increase in Death Duties in Mr. Lloyd George's famous Budget. Speaking in the House of Lords, on November 25th, 1909, that nobleman said:—

"Take the case of a man, aged 50, who owned £1,000,000, either in property or money. They might suppose that he was a family man and had a very earnest and proper desire to leave his property, which he received from his father, to his son without any reduc-

tion. Under the old Budget it would cost him, in insurance, £5,600 a year; under this Bill £9,000 a year. . . . And not only would he have to pay, but his son and grandson and great-grandson would have to pay 6s. 8d. out of every sovereign to enable them to maintain their estate intact. If the head of the family happened to have more than one son, God knew what he would do to keep his estate intact. . . ."

This pathetic case is of a kind which makes so small an appeal to most Liberals that it is difficult for them to take it seriously. On this main issue, Mr. Simon and Professor Clay will have no difficulty in carrying the bulk of the Party with them. Inheritance laws are so varied in different parts of the world, and have undergone so many changes in the history of each country, that there is no substance in the claim of right by immemorial custom, and still less a "natural right" to have them judged by any other test than that of expediency in the broad sense of the term. Of course, this expediency must have regard for the continuity of family life and the provision which a man would reasonably wish to make for his widow and to enable his children to continue their lives in circumstances not much inferior to those in which they have been brought up; and it is not easy to draw a sharp distinction in principle between the advantages which a man of means can give to his son during his lifetime and those which accrue to him as an heir. In practice, however, the social effects of the passing of big estates from generation to generation are so marked as to make it specially desirable to put a check upon this cause of inequality, and it is well worth while to consider how far this can be done without dangerous economic reactions.

"The right of disposition," says Sir Josiah Stamp, "is doubtless a powerful incentive to effort and capital accumulation." That, in a sentence, is the main economic case for the present system. Able men must not be discouraged from working as soon as they have provided for the immediate needs of themselves and their families; nor must they be encouraged to expend their substance in riotous living instead of investing it as the capital of industry. These considerations, it is needless to say, have not been overlooked by Mr. Simon. He has taken full account of them in framing his proposals, and argues with considerable force that the incentive to save will not be undermined by the increased taxation he advocates. But this is not the whole story. The ordinary view that Death Duties are paid "out of capital," whereas other taxes are paid out of income, is, we think, in the main true. Apart therefore from any question of impaired incentive, the supply of capital would tend to be decreased by inheritance taxes, if their proceeds were to be devoted to income purposes. Indeed this *must* be the result, if Mr. Simon's object of diminishing large fortunes is to be secured, unless the wastage can be made good by new saving and investment on the part of people of smaller means. It is part of Mr. Simon's case that, under his scheme for making the rich poorer, the poor will be richer, and therefore more able to save; but he does not, in his brief reference to the point, convince us that a redistribution would not result in a larger proportion of the national dividend going into current expenditure. It is arguable indeed that the existing Death Duties have already produced a tendency in that direction. The break-up of big landed estates has almost certainly been accelerated by their operation. This is not by any means necessarily a bad thing, and we do not share the view of those who regard any diminution of saving as disastrous, but those who advocate heavy additions to the taxation of inheritance should keep a watchful eye on the results of the existing taxes, which have not yet had a long enough run for their full social effects to have worked themselves out.

\* "The Inheritance of Riches." (Longmans. 6d.)

† "Property and Inheritance." By Henry Clay. (Daily News. 6d.)

‡ Published by Noel Douglas. 5s.



Mr. Simon's concrete proposal is:—

"That one of the first aims of Liberalism should be a great reduction in inequality by deliberately transferring on to inherited wealth the largest proportion of the burden of taxation which can be so transferred consistently with a steady increase in national capital and production."

To this end, he proposes:—

"(a) To graduate legacy duty according to the size of the individual legacy.

"(b) To increase the taxation on re-inherited wealth so that what a man leaves to his son will be moderately taxed; what the son passes on to the grandson will be much more heavily taxed."

The first of these proposals seems to us to be both equitable and expedient, and we hope that Mr. Simon will secure wide support for it. The second is a modification of Rignano's attractive scheme, which would increase the rate of taxation on transmitted wealth until, in the course of several generations, the State had acquired the whole of it. There is much to be said for this device on grounds of equity and general social advantage, if it is practicable; unfortunately, there are grave reasons to doubt its practicability, as Sir Josiah Stamp himself points out in his admirable introduction to Rignano's book. It is not possible in this article to argue the matter at all fully; it must suffice to suggest that if under Rignano's scheme the heir to an estate were not restricted to the use of income only (like the beneficiary of a trust) the temptation to squander capital would be very great, while if he were to be so restricted, the capital itself would be rendered immobile and its public utility greatly diminished. By the gradual extension of the scheme, this paralyzing influence would in time be laid upon a great part of the national capital with incalculable effects on trade and industry. It is possible, of course, that a device might be found by which this objection could be overcome, but up to the present we are not aware of any plan by which a marketable interest could be withheld from the beneficiary of the property while the property itself would remain fully available for industrial use.

These or other objections may be urged against any plan for the further drastic curtailment of the powers of bequest and inheritance, but we believe nevertheless that Mr. Simon and the Liberal Summer School Council are rendering a great public service in getting the matter thoroughly discussed. The case for and against the existing Death Duties has never been properly threshed out, and though a Conservative Chancellor in difficulties resorts to an increase in these taxes, the leading organ of his Party can still sum up an indignant debate on his proposals with the dictum that Death Duties are "the worst of all possible taxes." There is thus ample scope for further elucidation of the whole problem, and even if it is found that a graduation of legacy duty, with perhaps some further increase in the other existing duties on the transfer of property at death, is all that can safely be accomplished, the inquiry will not have been in vain. We suspect that one result of the Liberal questionnaire and the study which it is stimulating will be a widespread conviction that, *pace* the TIMES, Death Duties are the best of all possible taxes, in a State which is rightly devoting £50 millions a year to the repayment of the National Debt.

### THE LIBERAL LAND COMPROMISE

WHEN a party, or a Cabinet, or a group of allied States, which has been notoriously divided on an important issue of policy, suddenly announces that complete agreement has been reached, the news is naturally received with a certain scepticism.

Have the opposing forces really reconciled their differences, or have they merely patched up a formula for concealing them? Does the compromise represent a coherent, workable policy; or is it merely a featureless concoction of phrases, from which all practical efficacy has disappeared? Such are the questions that are rightly asked, and it is necessary to ask them of the compromise with regard to the rural land scheme which was reached at a meeting of the Liberal and Radical Candidates' Association on Tuesday afternoon.

Fortunately, however, there are grounds for a reassuring answer. This particular compromise has the essential mark of a genuine agreement, that it is based upon a clear principle, which is at once vitally important and eminently reasonable. In the words of the statement issued after Tuesday's meeting "the main difference between the Candidates' proposals and those put forward in 'The Land and the Nation' is that the modified policy is partial and gradual, whereas the original policy was universal and simultaneous." The difference between experimenting with a new form of tenure, side by side with other forms, on a limited scale, and introducing it wholesale, without regard to circumstances, is so great that it is easy to believe that it makes all the difference to the attitude of many Liberals who have been resolute opponents of the scheme as originally promulgated. On the other hand, we do not suppose that many of its admirers thought that it could in practice be applied otherwise than partially and gradually; so that Tuesday's compromise will not entail any sacrifice of conviction on their part. In short, there is no reason to question the sincerity of the compromise, because it seems likely enough that it represents the real opinions of the majority of both parties to it. Why, then, was the Liberal Party brought so near disruption over an essentially unreal issue? This is a question of considerable importance from a wider standpoint than that of the Liberal Party.

Why did Mr. Lloyd George's committee deliberately cast their scheme in a rigid, uniform mould, which they must have known was hardly practical politics? Because, although not practical politics, it seemed good propaganda. That you should concentrate on a big idea, state it in the most inspiring and challenging way, depict with a broad sweep the new horizons which it opens out, that you should leave to a much later stage the concessions to practicability which you know must inevitably be made—these have become almost accepted rules in the launching of a new campaign. But they are dangerous rules to apply indiscriminately to the large issues of economic reconstruction with which our generation is likely to be preoccupied. The nationalization of all the agricultural land of the country is not just three times as big and adventurous a policy as the nationalization of a third of it. It raises issues of a fundamentally different kind. It is obvious practical wisdom that the proposed County Agricultural Authorities should acquire land only gradually, so that their experience and capacity may keep pace with the functions imposed upon them; but that is not all. It is essential that we should be able to test the new system of tenure, by comparing its results with those of other systems; but that again is not all. The ownership by the State of all agricultural land would create for the first time in reality the phenomenon which looms so large in rhetoric—the phenomenon of a land monopoly. The notion of a complete State monopoly raises at once all kinds of problems, as to how land is to be transferred to industrial use, as to how the price is to be fixed for land so transferred, which are not nearly so formidable when the State is merely a very large landowner, and when the conditions obtaining in the outside market still supply a guide. The danger of business principles being sacrificed to political considerations becomes very serious, indeed, in the former case. In general, there is something crude and glib in the very idea of a sudden plunge to a new uniform system, something suggestive of an amateurishness oblivious to the complexities of the actual economic world. It is not, therefore, really good tactics to put forward a scheme in this shape in the first instance; and it is well that the mistake should be corrected sooner rather than later.

## CIRCULAR 1371

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

LORD EUSTACE PERCY has at last taken his first decisive step in disclosing the Government's real policy towards National Education. He has issued a circular telling local education authorities that for the three years 1926-29 the Exchequer contribution towards the cost of education will be fixed at the amount paid during the lean year 1924-25, less certain deductions, of which the most important are deductions of 1 per cent. from the elementary education grant, and 30s. a year for each child on the registers of the schools below the age of five years. For three years the Government proposes to put the education authorities to sleep in a bed of Procrustes.

The circular is brief, revolutionary, and facile, marked, many observers have noted, with a more than usual amount of that facileness for which Lord Eustace Percy has of late been earning an unenviable reputation. Superficially the circular is disturbing enough, for even the *Times* has held up a deprecating hand, later brought down resoundingly on the author's head, but the implications are of first-rate gravity. To these implications the local education authorities are waking up, and there are signs that before the circular is debated in Parliament, the President of the Board of Education will get it hot and strong. But, for all that, the circular is a relief and a welcome one, and for this reason: the circular at last tears away the veil which has hidden the Government's real heart and mind on the subject of National Education since it came into office. Lord Eustace Percy has been a great talker—he has talked more than any other Minister of Education since 1870. There seemed to be no ending to the bales of condescending homiletics which he has unloaded on every available platform in the land. But the world of education has not responded. Neither its brains, nor will, nor affections have been stimulated. There has been a vague sense of suspicion; what was this prodigious barrage of words intended as a preliminary to?

And now this circular makes as plain as plums in a plum-cake the real truth. The Government and the forces behind them are not in earnest about education. Where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Such corner stones of educational policy as remain untouched will do so on grounds of sheer political necessity—teachers' salaries, for instance. In so far as the present Government leave the accumulated gains of our educational system alone, it will be because the public is in advance of them, and would punish them for backsliding. The safety of our national system of education at the present moment lies not in the hands of the Government and of the President of the Board of Education, but in the hands of the public.

But of constructive progress in English education there can be no hope from a Conservative Government. All those, whether teachers, administrators, or members of the public, who ungrudgingly give both their minds and bodies to the service of education either realize this already, or are beginning to do so. The Conservative philosophy, in the hands of a few enthusiasts, may be patient of a liberal policy in education, but it is not expressive of it. And what may be possible in enthusiastic, if somewhat attenuated, theory, is made impossible in concrete fact by the hard-faced rank and file, and the vested interests.

Let us take some instances of the implications of Lord Eustace Percy's circular. The problem of teachers' salaries having been settled, though it seems that this circular may raise it again, the next constructive step

in education will be the reorganization of elementary education so that the advanced instruction of the older children will be made more efficient and profitable. And this depends almost wholly, in the first case, on the improvement of school premises. The next big task before elementary education is to improve the school buildings. This improvement Lord Eustace Percy renders impossible. And yet there can be no doubt of what his expert advisers and Inspectorate have told him about the condition of elementary school buildings, especially the voluntary schools. When Mr. Trevelyan was at the Board of Education he ordered his Inspectorate to report on the condition of the elementary school premises of England. On the basis of their reports, Lord Eustace Percy has within the last two months informed the local education authorities of England that there are thousands of schools (mostly voluntary schools owned by Anglican and Roman Catholic Trustees) of which, to use his own words,

"the premises appear to be unsuitable for continued recognition as public elementary schools and incapable of improvement";

or,

"upon the information before the Board, ought not to continue to be recognized in their present condition, at all events for their present numbers, but which might possibly be made suitable for the same or for reduced numbers by means of the necessary expenditure."

In his letter Lord Eustace Percy says, "For the last ten years many school buildings have inevitably been allowed to continue in use which have ceased to be suitable for their purpose, at any rate for the number of children for which they are still recognized by the Board. It appears to the Board that these cases should now be considered."

"It appears to the Board . . ."? Why, Lord Eustace Percy's own inspectors are wringing their hands over the disgraceful condition of the voluntary schools, especially in the rural areas! The Church of England is fast becoming the slum landlord of elementary education. Lord Eustace Percy knows well that the County Councils Association sent a deputation to interview him on April 21st last, with regard to a resolution of the Lancashire County Council asking the Association to approach the Board of Education "with a view to ascertaining whether some step can be taken by local education authorities in the direction of the improvement of the buildings of voluntary schools, and to discuss the position created by the Board's action in undertaking a survey of the premises of elementary schools throughout the country." This deputation, headed by Sir Percy Jackson, Chairman of the West Riding Education Committee, pointed out that "a large portion of the schools included in the Board's [Black] List would be voluntary schools where the problem of providing funds would in many cases be acute."

The particular iniquity of Lord Eustace Percy's circular may now be exhibited. The circular proposes to standardize the Exchequer contribution to local education authorities on the basis of the expenditure during 1924-5, when the local authorities were just escaping from the effects of the Geddes axe, and before they had had time to think out a reasonable programme for the improvement of elementary school buildings. If the circular becomes law, the local authorities will have no assistance from the Exchequer in improving Council school buildings unless they do so from "savings," i.e., by taking funds from other parts of the education services. More serious still, they will be unable to replace condemned voluntary schools by up-to-date Council schools. During the year 1924-5 most education authorities were spending next to nothing on replacing worn-out and obsolete school



buildings. During the next three years, under the operation of the circular, they will hardly have a penny piece to spare except for stopping existing schools from falling down. Insanitary and inadequate voluntary schools will be allowed to go on for another decade. So do the bright promises of the last election fail!

As for the invitation to the education authorities to throw the babies into the street, nothing need be said, except that it is to be hoped that the Government will receive from the working women of England the proper reward for its meanness.

## AT ST. STEPHEN'S

(By OUR PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT.)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 1925.

IN these notes to give an impartial account of what happens in Parliament, irrespective of party considerations; and I have often praised speeches and fights put up by the Government. But I can honestly say that, during the days which have been occupied in discussing the Committees' reports on the so-called Safeguarding of Industries, I have never seen a party so raked fore and aft, so impotent in defence, and so overwhelmed by detailed and technical knowledge, as the Tory Party has been by a small but united opposition from the Liberal and Labour benches. In fact, the appearance of the House suggested that Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister had practically given up any attempt at fighting at all. The representatives of the Treasury, whose sanction has to be obtained for the imposition of these Protectionist duties, were conspicuous by their absence. When Mr. Winston Churchill popped in, and was hilariously cheered, he invariably popped out again rapidly. The President of the Board of Trade, in most perfunctory speeches, short in duration, and entirely unconvincing in argument, presented the reports of the proposed duties on cutlery, gloves, and incandescent gas-mantles, in a spirit which roused not a single cheer, even from the Tariff Reform benches behind him, who were thirsty for blood. He relied on the reports alone, altogether ignoring the statement made by the Prime Minister last year concerning this queer method of manipulating finance—that after the Committees had reported, the Treasury would be the safeguard of the consumer in deciding whether they would allow the recommendations of the Committees to become law. There was not a word about the consumer in the whole of the President's dolorous defences. Mr. Runciman, Mr. Snowden, Captain Wedgwood Benn, Mr. Lees-Smith, and a number of lesser lights, with technical knowledge which apparently he had not taken the trouble to obtain, simply tore to pieces one recommendation after the other. Perhaps the most remarkable evidence of honesty and skill was that two Labour Members from Sheffield were found to oppose duties laid upon imported cutlery, which was supposed to be in competition with the Sheffield trade—duties which, in unscrupulous platform debate among men who were out of work, could easily have been made out to contribute to the direct advantage of that tormented city. Indeed, in these duties we were back to the old Mad-Hatter arguments of the Tariff Reformers, immortalized by the late Sir F. C. Gould. The Liberal and Labour attack showed conclusively that the result of the 33½ per cent. duty on knives, scissors, and miscellaneous cutlery could in no way bridge the gap between good Sheffield steel articles and those imported for the "common people," and that, therefore, the sole result must be that these common people would have to pay more for their knives, forks, scissors, &c., by the raising of the price through the duty collected at the Customs, and therefore have less purchasing power for buying other goods. Perhaps the climax was reached when it was found that in order to protect the hollow-ground razors of Sheffield we should put a tax on imported American Gillette safety blades—a tax which

was not asked for by the English company which produces safety-razor blades. You have here a violation of every condition laid down by Mr. Baldwin. The tax would be levelled against a country with a higher exchange than our own, and a country in which these particular products are produced by labour paid higher wages and working shorter hours. Whether anyone was insane enough to imagine that, by an increase of a third in the price of a Gillette blade, we should go back to the old system of shaving with the old-fashioned razor was not fully revealed in the debate. But it is a queer method of carrying out pledges that you will safeguard an industry against unfair competition, arising from lowness of wages and longer hours and a depreciated exchange, to clap a tax on the import of the product of men who work shorter hours with higher wages, and where the exchange is above, and not below, parity.

On the whole, the debates were held in good temper, even during the all-night sitting—a good temper probably produced by the fact that the Tories knew that they could get their Bill, and that Labour and Liberal could get all the speaking against it—an even division of spoil. Mr. Snowden was vitriolic and almost passionate in personal denunciation of Mr. Baldwin for violation of promises, a new experience in a House which regards Mr. Baldwin as a kind of genial child. Mr. Runciman spoke with the weight of great business knowledge; and Captain Wedgwood Benn showed once more his capacity, not only for utilizing facts which are unpleasant to his opponents, but also for quickness of repartee and brilliance of epigram. Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister mainly confined himself to heavily moving the closure at stated intervals like the striking of a clock. One supposes that this dissection will continue through all the subsequent stages of the Bills, for already the Opposition have succeeded in causing the withdrawal of the duty on paper recommended after the resolution had been changed three or four times. And although Mr. Baldwin, of course, explained this withdrawal on the ground that he had to give an extra day to Ireland, there were others who thought otherwise. The two greatest Conservative Ministers of the nineteenth century, Sir Robert Peel and Gladstone, swept away something like a thousand of these wretched attempts for the plunder of the public by private interests, and one would not envy the task of any Conservative Government called to power to devise a scientific tariff to replace these thousand articles again, if carried out in the method and temper by which arguments were advanced for taxes on cutlery and gloves.

The Irish question has suddenly come to a solution satisfactory to all parties alike, and all parties alike feel as if a nightmare has been removed. Mr. Baldwin on Tuesday explained the provisions of the revised Treaty in a speech which cannot be accounted one of his best efforts to a House extraordinarily apathetic; and Mr. J. H. Thomas carried off, I think, the honours of the debate. Clause 5, which has been dropped, left an unlimited liability of payment from Ireland to England, which was calculated to wreck all Irish finance so long as it remained unlimited. The system adopted is, in substance, that which has been advocated for so long by Sir James O'Connor, late Lord Justice of Ireland—to leave the Boundary alone, to attempt no coercion on one side or the other, but to make it financially worth while for Ulster to opt to come into united Ireland.

The announcement made late on Tuesday night, after two days of strenuous discussion, that a unanimous compromise had been agreed to by the Liberal Candidates' Association, was received with joy by the Liberal Members, and perhaps with some chagrin by other parties, who had confidently predicted the complete smash up of the Liberal Party. I hear that the debates, although conducted with great friendliness, were of a very strenuous nature, more characteristic of disputes in America on party platforms than discussions in this country. At first each side held tenaciously to its own opinion, but at last the overwhelming desire and determination for unity, voiced especially by candidates from the provinces, swept all obstructions aside, and enabled a common and agreed statement to be issued

to the Press. This may mean a real epoch in the history of a Party which has been so torn by internal dissensions widely advertised in the newspapers, that many convinced Liberals had been growing sick of the whole affair and threatened to retire from politics. A tribute is due to Mr. Pringle as chairman, to Mr. Harcourt Johnson as secretary, and to the crowded number of candidates, many of whom were prepared to surrender on some particular points of detail to which they attached great importance. The great rejoicing at the end, after hours of debate, in which at times agreement seemed impossible, will be reflected in every constituency in the kingdom.

## LIFE AND POLITICS

THERE were some unusually interesting points in the meeting of the Liberal candidates at which peace was made with Mr. Lloyd George. The discussion during the first hour or two was of the frankest. Mr. George was in the mood for hitting out, and he indulged it. As lunch-time approached it looked as though a critical vote could not be avoided, but Mr. Pringle, with an acute sense of what was happening, suddenly adjourned the meeting. Mr. George, I gather, thought the manœuvre implied war, and when the afternoon brought agreement few men present can have been less prepared than he. The issue now lies between the Candidates' Association, which has a membership of 100 per cent., and the National Liberal Federation. The opportunities of the past year have been missed by the Federation, while the candidates, whatever else may be said about them, have at least shown a live interest in definite matters of policy.

Ripon, of course, is an invincible Conservative seat, and there is no party moral of any consequence to be drawn from the by-election. It cannot, for instance, be worth while to underline the large Liberal vote. Between the conditions of 1910 and of 1925 no comparison is possible. The important fact is the restoration of Mr. Hills to Parliament. He is an admirable Member. If the Prime Minister had appointed him Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs the whole House would have been pleased.

The organizers of the Liberal Fair, I imagine, are almost as much surprised as gratified by the booming success of the enterprise. They knew it was a risk. Liberals are supposed not to be good at such things. The postponement on account of the royal mourning added greatly to the difficulty. There were no means of gauging the response of the Liberal public. No one could say that forebodings were unreasonable. But the results of the first day dispelled them all. The Fair itself was strikingly good. There was a remarkable display of things for sale, at prices which stood well the test of comparison with the shops. In variety and efficiency the sideshows were a triumph, which brought astonishment to everybody. I find that in estimating the gains of the Fair, Liberal headquarters are inclined, quite rightly, to give first place to the imponderables. They have learned a lot from the Albert Hall experience about the readiness of Liberals, especially young Liberals, to work with enthusiasm and to contribute; and they have discovered the existence of a social spirit in the rank and file. This Fair should prove to be a strong and wholesome influence towards the democratization of party funds.

Storms may rage around the Lloyd George Land Scheme, but it is worth while noting that there is a striking unanimity upon one matter. That is the excel-

lence, both as to form and style, of "The Land and the Nation." To the substance of the report, it should be unnecessary to say, a large number of people contributed; but I think I am right in saying that the redaction was mainly the work of Mr. W. McGregor Eagar, whose conspicuous ability is thus revealed and as to whose record and personality a good deal of curiosity has found expression since discussion of the Land Scheme was started. Mr. Eagar is an Oxford man, who made his first sphere of work in the slums of Bermondsey. A keen housing reformer, he was for some time associated with the Garden Cities Association, and then found his way into the Land Inquiry, which furnished him with a first-rate opportunity for the display of his special gifts.

The change in the control of the SPECTATOR being formally announced, it is in order for me to speak of certain things which could not properly be discussed some months ago, when I made reference on this page to the end of Mr. St. Loe Strachey's distinguished editorship. During his later stage he became notably experimental. If the opinion of the new directors were disclosed, it would assuredly be that signed leading articles and other quite daring innovations have not been justified. Mr. J. B. Atkins (whom, as editor, we all salute) and Mr. Evelyn Wrench will commit the paper to a more orthodox Conservatism, alike in politics and in journalistic technique, than Mr. Strachey could bring himself to accept. Happily, his name is still to appear in the SPECTATOR, which, presumably, will contain even more than its former generous allowance of articles on American affairs. I am delighted to see that "The Adventure of Living" is now obtainable in an excellent two-shilling edition. An opportunity is hereby afforded me for a word on the most astonishing feature of Mr. Strachey's "subjective autobiography." He inherited a journal which Hutton and Townsend had identified with liberal Anglicanism; he kept it true to their associations and temper. And yet, in relating his own career and the development of his mind, he has nothing to say of religious belief or spiritual experience. Not until he reaches the penultimate page does he speak of his faith: and then he illustrates it by quoting a purely ethical apologue from the pen of that valiant Victorian agnostic, FitzJames Stephen. The fact would seem to imply that a second volume is called for.

Herr Ernst Toller was granted by the Home Office a short extension of time for his visit, but he is required to leave England within a few days. This is an example of the treatment which, under the new Tibetan-British rules, our authorities deem to be just and appropriate for eminent European visitors, including men of letters who enjoy a world reputation. Of course, the country will not allow the system to become permanent. We shall return in good time to the tradition of international courtesy which was part of the glory of England for several centuries. But here is the case of Ernst Toller to prove that in the meantime the British Government, going beyond the proper scope of the anti-alien laws, is ready to apply a method of time-rationing to any guest from the Continent—and particularly, it would appear, if he belongs to what is understood to be the one enduring international realm, the realm of ideas and art.

A full list of the American citizens who have accepted decorations from the French Government has been published by a New York newspaper. This is part of the determined effort now being made in America to estimate the extent of European influence, directly



propagandist and otherwise, among Americans during the war years. Our Government, I believe, made no attempt to bring American citizens within the range of British decorations. That, obviously, would have been absurd; but there were a few conspicuous exceptions, which, curiously enough, passed into immediate oblivion. Soon after the United States entered the War the G.C.B. was conferred upon General Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the American Forces; the G.C.M.G. upon Generals March and Bliss; and the G.C.B. upon Mr. J. W. Gerard, American Ambassador in Berlin, 1913-17. When the *Times* reviewed that once-famous book, "My Four Years in Germany," it made a particular point of calling the author Sir James Gerard, which might have become an inextinguishable joke among the Ambassador's fellow countrymen.

The surprising improvization of winter sports during the week of early frost has been everywhere commented upon as proof of the fervour with which our people would enjoy themselves out of doors, if the traditional climate of the English winter were restored for a spell. But a modern city is not dependent upon the outside air for ice-sports. On the contrary, even in countries with zero temperatures artificial ice is preferred, alike by skaters, curlers, and hockey-players. It is ludicrous that London should still have to wait for its ice arena, and that skaters in the South of England should have to go to Manchester for practice.

Easton Lodge, Dunmow, offered by Lady Warwick to the Trade Union Congress for an International Labour University, is not a benefaction that can be accepted gratefully out of hand. As a matter of fact, the question of adult education is one of extreme difficulty for the Labour Party. No cause with which Labour is associated has, in the past twenty years, evoked more devoted service from individuals and groups in the movement; but the story of Ruskin College and of the Central Labour College provides evidence of the complication of the problem. The question of finance alone is baffling enough, and it is obvious that Lady Warwick's gift would in no way minimize that. As to Easton Lodge itself, I should have said that it is not by any means adapted to the purposes of an international college for Labour students. The rural character which makes it perfect for a summer school would be a serious disadvantage.

"We are so accustomed to think of Joseph Chamberlain as a national and imperial statesman that we are apt to forget that the foundations of his career were local, municipal, and industrial."—No, you are quite wrong. I do not quote that sentence from the *Star*. I read it in the editorial columns of the *Morning Post*. Call it the Duke's Motto.

KAPPA.

## AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

"And what is Christmas?"

"Why, it is the happiest time of the year. It is the season of mirth and cold weather. It is the time when Christmas-boxes and jokes are given; when mistle-toe, and red-berried laurel, and soups, and sliding, and school-boys, prevail; when the country is illuminated by fires and bright faces; and the town is radiant with laughing children. Oranges, as rich as the fruit of the Hesperides, shine out in huge golden heaps. Cakes, frosted over (as if to rival the glittering snow) come forth by thousands from their summer (caves) ovens: and on every stall at every corner of every street are the roasted apples, like incense fuming on Pagan altars."

WHO wrote that? Dickens? No, sir. The words are too carefully chosen; it is too elaborately simple, too literary, for Dickens. I will give you another chance. This, I think, is more characteristic:—

"And this night is CHRISTMAS EVE. Formerly it was a serious and holy vigil. Our forefathers observed it strictly till a certain hour, and then requited their

own forbearance with cups of ale and Christmas candles, with placing the *yule log* on the fire, and roaring themselves thirsty till morning. Time has altered this. We are neither so good as our forefathers were—nor so bad. We go to bed sober; but we have forgotten their old devotions. Our conduct looks like a sort of compromise; so that we are not worse than our ancestors, we are satisfied not to be better: but let that pass."

Who wrote that? Charles Lamb? Well, now I have to confess that I do not know who wrote those two passages. I thought when I started the inquiry that they were Lamb's. Certainly I found them in a volume of his works; but happening just now to turn to the appendix, I see that the editor lifted the article in which they occur from the *LONDON MAGAZINE* of December, 1822, on the off chance that Lamb had touched it up. He thinks that it is Hood's. It doesn't really matter who wrote it, anyway. It has served my purpose, which was to introduce the subjects of Christmas and Charles Lamb together, and so to induce that genial atmosphere in which the reader will tolerate what follows.

To make amends, and incidentally to bring me a little closer to the real subject of my discourse, I will here transcribe two isolated sentences from the "Table Talk" which are indubitably Lamb's:—

"'Tis unpleasant to meet a beggar. It is painful to deny him; and if you relieve him, it is so much out of your pocket."

"The greatest pleasure I know, is to do a good action by stealth, and to have it found out by accident."

It will now be easy for the discerning reader to guess what I am about. I am, of course, a beggar; and I hope it may prove painful to deny me, though the alternative may lighten your pocket. But first I want to make a suggestion with respect to doing good by stealth. At Christmas, we talk much of good old customs, and there is one old custom which is so good that I should like very much to see it revived. I refer to the practice of sending anonymous presents of game and other luxuries to writers in the Press. What an excellent notion! Here is Charles Lamb writing to this very journal (or the better half of it) on November 30th, 1833, to present "his acknowledgments to his 'Correspondent Unknown,' for a basket of prodigiously fine game. He takes for granted that so amiable a character must be a reader of the *ATHENÆUM*. Else he had meditated a notice in the *Times*." Here, surely, is a practice well worth preserving. Any little offering addressed Mr. Peter Ibbetson, c/o The Editor, will be most gratefully received, and although I cannot promise you even an anonymous immortality such as Elia bestowed upon his patron, I hope you will not be so mean-spirited as to ride off on that score. If it may justly be contended that I am not worthy of a hare (for that was what Charles Lamb received), a rabbit or a pigeon would not be taken amiss.

I was emboldened to make the foregoing suggestion by the fact, which I now proudly reveal for the first time, that a reader did send me a guinea on the strength of an article on "The Spirit of Christmas," which I wrote at this time last year. Yes, a complete stranger sent me a guinea to give to any charity I liked; and although I had glibly recommended a long list of excellent charities in my article, I was greatly perplexed as to where that guinea should go. I felt that a great compliment had been paid to me, for it really is a mark of confidence to entrust your charity to another. There are men to whom I would entrust my money for other purposes, but charity seems to me a matter of individual

taste. I would as soon leave the choice of my food and clothes to another as my choice of charities.

That was my difficulty. I didn't even know the age of my correspondent, or the colour of his hair. I only knew that he had a good heart and a trustful disposition, and that he was going on a sea-voyage. Perhaps I ought to have given his money to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, or the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society; but then, if disaster had overtaken him, he might have been rescued by his own guinea, and I was sure he didn't want it back in any form. The same objection applied to the London Missionary Society, and to the Friends' Foreign Mission Association, which would have looked after his body and soul if he had been cast away and "gone native." I should have liked to have financed the Seafarers' Education Service, which puts Crews' Libraries on ships, or the Fisheries Organization Society, which helps fishermen to help themselves through co-operation, but neither of these are strictly charities. Then there were the Church Army and the Salvation Army, which do a lot of good among the poor, but my friend might have been a pacifist. If it had been this year, I might have put it into the Colour Ballot of the British Charities Association, and perhaps secured a prize. I thought of the National Institute for the Blind and of St. Dunstan's, which ought to be remembered at Christmas, as at all other times. I thought of the Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa, of the Shaftesbury Society, the Waifs and Strays' Society, Dr. Barnardo's Homes, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the other organizations which look after the welfare of children, for Christmas is the children's festival, and it is even more intolerable to think of cold or hungry children on Christmas Day than at other times. I thought of the hospitals, particularly Middlesex Hospital, which, we all know, is falling down, and the Alexandra Orphanage (which should be specially remembered *this* year), and the Royal Surgical Aid Society. I remembered the Royal Association in aid of the Deaf and Dumb, and the British Home and Hospital for Incurables; the "Friends of Armenia," who succour the worst-used people in the world, and the Home Workers' Union, which looks after poor women making sweated goods. But I felt that this was a Christmas gift, given in the Spirit of Christmas, and that both children and feasting were implied in that, so I passed it on to the Rev. Noel Lambert, of St. Gabriel's Vicarage, who gives a good Christmas dinner to a host of small children who would otherwise go without. (The Field Lane Institution does the same good turn for destitute men and women—an equally jolly proceeding.) Was I right? Perhaps my "Unknown Correspondent" will tell me. But solutions (and guineas) are invited from other readers, as well as from him. Consider the problem for yourselves. It is fine seasonable weather, and if the frost holds we shall have a real old-fashioned, sparkling, skating, merry Christmas. "Fine time for them as is well wrapped up, as the Polar Bear said to himself, ven he was practising his skating." Capital! But "seasonable" weather is hard weather for those who go short of fuel and food and health. We must be seasonable in our charity as well, this Christmas. Make your own choice and back your fancy, ladies and gentlemen, but put up your stakes. If you are in doubt, send your contributions to me, and I hereby warn all and sundry that I shall consider myself at liberty to do what I think best with any money which reaches me, without regard to the unexpressed wishes of the sender. But game intended for my own consumption should be specially labelled for

PETER IBBETSON.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### WHAT DID MR. KEYNES SEE IN RUSSIA?

SIR,—The series of articles of Mr. J. Maynard Keynes on Russia, in the three October issues of your honoured magazine, which came, unfortunately, somewhat belated in my hands, was a matter of great interest and importance for all who are desirous of understanding what really is happening in this contradictory and enigmatic country. As this problem is not less real now than when Mr. Keynes made his studies, perhaps you will allow me to add some remarks to his very stimulating conclusions. My justification in doing this is that I have always been of the opinion that it was an unheard-of omission of present-day social science not to study in a careful, objective, and systematic manner this biggest social upheaval of mankind. In the last years I did my best to convince some competent circles and personalities, both in Europe and in America, of the absolute necessity of such an inquiry. May I be permitted to quote some lines from a memorandum I have elaborated for this purpose? "In spite of the awful dimensions and world-shaking consequences of this historical cataclysm, contemporary science has so far taken very little interest in investigating, analyzing, understanding, and appreciating seriously and without bias this enormous social event. Of course, there has arisen a vast literature commenting on the Russian experiment, but with the honourable exception of very few impartial, but incomplete, essays, this literature consists of a long series of venomous pamphlets (instigated partly by the Soviets, partly by the counter-revolution), glorifying or calumniating all which the Russian revolution has made, undertaken, or destroyed."

On the basis of these and similar considerations, I urged the necessity of an organized and collective scientific enterprise in order to collect the most important facts and to draw the logical consequences of them. All my efforts have remained unsuccessful, and therefore I was very pleased to learn that, after Mr. Bertrand Russell, another great Englishman, Mr. J. Maynard Keynes—after the philosopher, the social economist—felt the need to go to Russia and to regard things *au dessus de la mêlée*. Really, nobody in the world could be more authorized than Mr. Maynard Keynes to have his judgment listened to carefully. Nevertheless, in spite of his remarkable insight and absolutely cautious objectivity, I have the feeling that the lucid and valuable report of the English scientist contains only a small part of the reality concerning Russia, which is only natural, because the extreme bigness and complications of the land, and of the problem, make it psychologically impossible for an isolated investigator to embrace the whole tremendous social process. To make my criticism more clear, may I be permitted to make some few remarks concerning certain conclusions of Mr. Keynes? I base my objections not only on a theoretical study of the problem, but also on an immediate experience which I had with an analogous historical movement, the Hungarian Bolshevik experiment, which has been not only a blind imitation of the big Russian model on a small scale, but at the same time a parallel social process resulting from analogous antecedents, and in which I could make some microscopical observations concerning the motives and mass psychology of this movement.

I agree entirely with Mr. Keynes about the essentially religious nature of the phenomena, in spite of their strictly atheistic and materialistic ideology. In my book, "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary" (London: King & Son), I endeavoured to analyze this religion in detail as a mixture of the classical Marxist doctrine and the experiences in the ethics and the communism of the trenches. I agree also, without any qualification, with Mr. Keynes on the total economic failure of the Communist experiment from a theoretical point of view. And finally I greet his admonition to give Russia her chance, to help and not hinder, and to regard the Bolshevik experiment as something hopeful after the Czarist petrification of Russian society.

The two main points in which I dissent from the eminent scholar are: (1) His appreciation of the practical issues of the Communistic experiment, and (2) his hopes concerning the future of the Russian religion.

As to the practical issues of the Communistic economic experiment, I cannot see a single really Communistic



feature in the present-day Russia, and the progress which the Soviet State has achieved has nothing to do with any special feature of Communism, but rather with the continuous and systematic withdrawal, dilution, and betrayal of the Communistic doctrine. The recovery of Russia has nothing to do with the elaboration of a semi-Communistic system, but with the clandestine reintroduction of capitalistic economy. One after the other of the classical Marxist claims has been abandoned; they introduced private property in land and in small industries and commerce; they accepted, instead of the hotly vindicated labour time-currency, the capitalistic money currency and credit system; they reintroduced the capitalistic discipline of the workers strengthened by State control and military pressure; they forsook the dogma of equal remuneration, and instituted a large scale of qualitative remuneration; they did not abolish the State according to the prophecy of Karl Marx, but reinforced bureaucracy and militarism; they did not eliminate "the rule of men over men," but they monstrously developed the hideous system of the Czarist secret police service, &c., &c. If their saints, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, could see from a cloud of Communistic Pantheon the operations of their followers, their wrath would not be less than the indignation of the chief Marxist priest now living, Karl Kautsky, excommunicating in his last book the Russian Sovietists as unscrupulous falsifiers of the Communist faith who had established, according to Kautsky's view, a worse and more oppressed Russia than the Czarist absolutism. Therefore, I cannot see at all the facts which Mr. Keynes comments as a Communism with "sufficient dilution and added impurity." I see only a kind of State capitalism based on the brutally exploited labour of the peasants, the small artisans, and the small merchants, directed by a highly inefficient and extremely costly red-tape bureaucracy.

I have similar doubts concerning the religious diagnosis of Mr. Keynes. Seeing the economic inadequacy of the present system, he asks "whether it will not be capable of catching the multitude by its religious content." Mr. Keynes seems to be rather affirmative on this point, and considers as the most attractive element of the new system its furore against money-economy and its assertion of the principle of service. I doubt whether Mr. Keynes is right in this interpretation of the Russian religion. Do not forget that this religion is essentially materialistic, atheistic, and hedonistic. It rejects money, not as a means of sensual pleasure, but as a means of capitalistic exploitation. If you read the classical doctrine of Communism, you will find that they do not repudiate at all the hedonism of capitalism, but they will distribute it among the workers. The present-day asceticism of Communism which impresses Mr. Keynes so much, is not at all a feature of the religious creed, as it was in early Christianity, among English Puritans, and some enthusiastic leaders of the French Revolution, but it is only the economic necessity of the present situation. They could not otherwise maintain their present system. And when I see that the whole ascetic religion of the Early Christians, of the English Puritans, of Robespierre and his friends, was entirely incapable of remoulding human nature against the pleasures of money, in spite of the high ideality and the sublime transcendentality of these historical movements, why should I hope with Mr. Keynes that the *terre à terre* materialistic creed of the Communist, based on the hatred not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of the peasants and of all kinds of independently thinking intellectuals, could become victorious against an economy based on the pursuit of money?

Surely at the beginning Communism had a religious force, but this force did not have its root in the conception suggested by Mr. Keynes, but in its Messianic prophecies that the old wretched world will soon be overthrown by the Communistic revolution and a new world state without war, without misery, without exploitation, will arise. That is to say, the Communists promised the happy millennium, the old religious hope of the popular masses, by the way of the Communistic world revolution and the Marxist doctrine. After the terrible collapse of these Russian pretensions, Communism lost its sway upon the Western and Central parts of Europe. Where it still is a driving force, is among the backward peoples of the Orient. But its influence is scarcely

due to its struggle against Money, as Mr. Keynes seems to suppose it, but to two quite different aspects of its propaganda. One is its attack upon all feudal systems, and the hope of the expropriation of the large estates which it gives to the peasants. The second is its fight against imperialism and its fomenting of all kinds of nationalism.—Yours, &c.,

OSCAR JASZI.

Oberlin College, November 24th, 1925.

#### TAXES IN FRANCE

SIR,—I read THE NATION every week with the greatest care. As France is my country, I feel a very keen interest in all opinions concerning the French financial crisis, and I have deeply appreciated the fair criticism in recent articles of your review on that subject. Nevertheless, may I take the liberty to say that one of the statements made by Mr. Robert Dell to the effect that indirect taxes are four-fifths of the whole French national revenue is not accurate? I am in a position to give you a proof that luckily this is not the exact proportion. I have in hand the Inventory of the French Financial Situation published in 1924 by the Minister of Finance, and I find in this publication the following figures for 1923:—

I. Direct taxes on income ... ..	27.7 per cent.
II. Wealth taxes and Stamp duties ... ..	20.1 per cent.
III. Luxuries taxes ... ..	3.2 per cent.
IV. Alcohol, Tobacco, Powder ... ..	15.9 per cent.
V. Consumption taxes ... ..	33.1 per cent.

Death duties, which actually have been very heavy since 1920, should be considered practically as direct taxes; but one must not forget that in France the administrative classification does not put them under the heading of direct taxes, and this indeed can be misleading. The financial service in charge of death duties is the "Enregistrement," and the Enregistrement is the main item of the "Wealth taxes and Stamp duties." Therefore, as death duties are direct taxes, we must add to the 5,696 million francs produced by the direct taxes on income the important sums collected by the Enregistrement with regard to death duties. Thus the proportion of indirect taxes is much less than four-fifths of the whole French national revenue.

I do not write this letter to back the arguments of the French Opposition, whose policy I personally disapprove of, but in any case one must be fair, and I thought it my duty to show the exact proportion of taxes in France, and to correct this item of an article that seemed to me, as far as a young man has the right to judge, full of wisdom.

The views of Mr. Robert Dell on the present French Government and the French Opposition seem to be very fortunate. I find nothing more difficult than to hold at present a definite political opinion in accordance with the French political labels of to-day. We have witnessed lately many a blunder under the Bloc des Gauches, but, as Mr. Robert Dell says, how can the Opposition forget the financial errors of the Bloc National? What is the worth of these illusions nourished by more than one unsteady Cabinet? Does not this financial muddle give too good an excuse to petty prejudices of all parties? For the financial disease passion is not even a quack. With what lack of comprehension Mr. J. Maynard Keynes's fair outlook of the European crisis was received in my country is indeed a well-known story. The only excuse is that war has been fought more tragically on our land than anywhere else. The families of the hundred thousands of British soldiers who fell on those battlefields know it well. After the Armistice we had close at hand the most gloomy and nightmare-like pictures, and this may have contributed to give us excessive or contradictory opinions. Still one must be confident in the buoyancy of the French. Sooner or later common sense will prevail. The quotation that Mr. Robert Dell has made from M. Romier shows the English reader that there are men in France who see things from a higher point of view than the average short-sighted bourgeois or the not-always-open-minded Radical Socialist. The declarations made by M. Briand in the Chambre des Députés may allow us to hope that in the long run the fiddles will play the right tune.—Yours, &c.,

LOUIS ROCHE.

## HENRY ARTHUR JONES, DRAMATIST: SELF-REVEALED\*

## A Conversation on the Art of Writing Plays with ARCHIBALD HENDERSON

Henderson: Do you ever follow the line of classic tradition and build your play around a single individual, making that character the focus or central point of the play?

Jones [nodding assent]: Nearly all the great plays of the world are built around a single leading character—Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, Oedipus, &c. Historic and poetic plays are generally built around a single character. I have often started with a single leading character, letting the other characters and the story grow round him—as in "The Middleman," "Mrs. Dane," "The Hypocrites," &c.

When the first idea of "The Liars" came to me, Falkner, and not Sir Christopher, was the chief part; and I could have built the story round Falkner. But in that case the play would have developed into a drama rather than a comedy. But as the piece grew in my mind it irresistibly shaped itself into a comedy. The fact that the great majority of plays of all kinds are mainly the story of one or two leading characters, is an explanation, and a justification, of the star system. When we go to see Hamlet we go, not so much to see the play, as to see some notable actor in the leading part.

Henderson: In witnessing a play I often have the feeling that the dramatist has thrown a lot of characters upon the stage, locked in a given situation; and that the drama arises from the reactions of these particular individuals to the given situation. Another group of individuals might well resolve the problem in a different way. May I put the matter this way: Do you ever begin a play with a group of clearly defined characters, and let the drama develop from the mutual conflicts of the characters?

Jones: Character and action in a play should jump together and be inseparable. I should find it impossible to start a play with a group of well-defined characters, unless I had imagined their actions at the same time, and also their reactions upon each other.

It is, however, a common thing to start a play with one leading character and build a scheme of action around him, drawing in other important characters as the scheme takes shape. But on the stage character is in a vacuum until it is revealed by action. Until you have some sort of a story, however meagre, you have no play. Again, it is possible to imagine a *milieu* containing certain types of character; but until you realize them and set them doing things you have no play.

Henderson: An American critic once compared the methods of De Maupassant with those of O. Henry in the short-story, to the disadvantage of the latter—on the ground that once De Maupassant had drawn a character, you could infallibly tell what that character would do in any given set of circumstances; whereas the characters of O. Henry were quite irresponsible: you could never calculate in advance what they might do. The argument really is a brief for the American artist—who continually furnishes richness, the inexplicable, and that "continual slight novelty" which is the essential quality of romance.

To turn for the moment from character to plot, most plays, on analysis, appear to be written for the sake of a given situation. The dramatist seems to have imagined the crisis first; shown the characters "up against" a given combination of circumstances; and then written the play up to this situation—with a final resolution of the problem. Perhaps the dramatist begins a play at the end or in the middle or at least with the penultimate act—even writing the last act before he writes the first!

Jones: I never begin to write a play until the whole scheme of it has taken a definite shape in my mind, and until I can get a rough view of all its leading scenes and characters. But I make a great number of notes as

the play grows, and sometimes I jot down a few sentences of any scene that vividly impresses itself upon me.

Sometimes I have to take my plan to pieces after I have constructed it, and always there are minor alterations to be made. But I always begin to write with the first act clearly mapped out, and the remaining acts roughly mapped out in their sequence. I dwell upon the play for a considerable time before I start to write it, trying to know my characters intimately, so that the story may grow by its own impulse, rather than by my forcing.

Henderson: Some time ago I was much fascinated by the confession of a distinguished Continental dramatist who told me he had materially altered his technic in mid-channel. I remember that, according to your own story, you had much difficulty in breaking away from melodrama; and deliberately cut the Gordian knot with "Saints and Sinners."

Jones: The technic of writing plays has changed so much during the nearly fifty years that I have been writing for the English theatre; and I daresay I have changed with it. To get a footing on the English stage I had for many years to write melodrama. The technic of melodrama is different to some extent from the technic of comedy. But though the technic of playwriting changes, the main principles of dramatic construction remain the same. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the conventions, rather than the technic of playwriting, change from time to time.

I have not deliberately changed my technic; but as I studied and practised playwriting, my technic became firmer and more assured. After the great popular success of "The Silver King" (in which I owed much to Henry Herman and Wilson Barrett), it took me eleven years' incessant study in the English theatre, watching and dissecting almost every new play, before I could take a play to a manager, printed and ready for rehearsal, so that he could put it on the stage without the alteration of a single line. "The Masqueraders," "The Case of Rebellious Susan," "The Liars," "The Hypocrites," and my other plays since 1894 have been rehearsed from printed books; and in most of them not a line has been changed since they left my study.

Henderson: Brunetière once made the astonishing remark that the "novel is the contrary of the drama." And again he says: "The drama and the novel are not the same thing; or rather each is the reverse of the other." I fully agree with your contention that this is quite false. A short-story is the nearest fictive analogue to the one-act play; and the most gripping and arresting short-stories are essentially dramatic. The analogy holds even in the bastard case of the short-story which is only an expanded anecdote; for, after all, an anecdote is a tiny drama. I quite agree with you that "the novel approaches the play, and tends to contain a play or a number of plays according to the force and number of its dramatic scenes, and according as these scenes can be made to fall into an organic connected sequence, or into more than one organic connected sequence." For instance, Michael Arlen's "The Green Hat" is full of dramatic crises; and it is really written for the sake of the final revelation of Iris Storm's character in the tense dramatic conflict of the last chapter.

And yet! The drama differs from the novel in being rigidly confined within certain limiting restrictions and conventions. Clearly, as distinguished from the art of fiction, there are certain principal factors which must always be borne in mind in the writing of a play.

Jones: You are quite right, of course. There are two such principal factors.

First, a drama is to be presented to an audience, a crowd of listeners, the most of whom have only a limited energy of attention to bestow upon the piece, and whose interest needs to be unflaggingly sustained

\*The previous portion of this conversation appeared in THE NATION 5th December 1925.



from moment to moment. Therefore the play must be compact within the time that the audience of the day are able or willing to concentrate their attention.

Second, being addressed to general average audiences, the drama should try to meet them on the common ground of the permanent passions, emotions, follies, vices, and humours of humanity. It should not be written for a clique, or for a coterie of superior persons. Repertory theatres have failed in England because their promoters have mainly produced freakish and eccentric pieces, and have tried to elevate the drama by offering plays that keep the general public out of the theatre.

Henderson: To speak of Ibsen again, he once confessed that he always used the individual as his starting-point. He probably never worked his ideas into a play solely for their own sake. With you, I believe, the story, the situation, is the springboard; and I daresay you never use, for the germ of your play, one central or controlling idea.

Jones: With myself, a play often springs suddenly from a certain character in a certain situation. I do not start from "ideas" or "opinions." I take the keenest interest in social matters, and I think I may lay claim to have studied them. But the dramatist's main business, and his great delight, is to paint men and women faithfully as he sees them—not to air his "ideas" and "opinions." And as men are judged, not by their "ideas" and "opinions," but by their actions, the dramatist must frame his characters in a story. So far as he uses the stage to exploit his "ideas" and "opinions," he is not a dramatist, but a propagandist. This is not to say that the dramatist may not deal with the great issues of life, and even with the passing problems of the day, if he can exhibit them in an interesting story. But the true vocation of the dramatist is to hide himself behind his characters, and to let them have the whole stage. But in trying to conceal himself behind his personages he often reveals himself most conspicuously. In any case, he can scarcely avoid throwing sidelights and reflections of his "ideas" and "opinions," and incidentally offering some criticism of life.

Henderson [smiling]: My dear Mr. Jones, you have been exceedingly patient with me; and have most conscientiously tried to answer illuminatingly my many interrogations. Many thanks. And now I shall ask but two more questions: one very general, and one very special. First, please try to tell me what mental process takes place when you write a play.

Jones: It is very difficult to give a succinct answer to this question. With me the primary mental process is spontaneous and automatic, like dreaming awake. And this process often goes on while I am busy with other things—in a separate compartment of consciousness. Of course, I keep a measure of control and selection over the waking dream, and as it takes a more definite shape this power of control and selection increases, and other mental processes are brought into play: the construction of a concrete piece of action gradually unfolding itself; attempts to realize each of the personages as a living man or woman whom I know, and who speaks and acts throughout the play with his own voice and purpose, and not with mine; the gathering together of all the threads of interest and action and weaving the various characters as weft into warp until they form a continuous correlated whole.

Henderson: That question was difficult to answer, but here is one that is harder still. Will you please take one of your own plays and indicate, in some detail, how you built up the drama?

Jones: From my answers to the other questions you will gather that my plays have generally grown round a nucleus. A dramatist cannot build up a play until he has some rough scheme of action in his mind. I found the nucleus of "Mrs. Dane's Defence" in a newspaper account of an action that was brought by a Mrs. Osborne for defamation of character. Mrs. Osborne had been staying with a friend, who afterwards spread a report that Mrs. Osborne had stolen her jewellery. The matter gained some publicity, and to defend her character Mrs. Osborne was obliged at length to bring an action. Lord

Chief Justice Russell—then Sir Charles Russell, K.C.—defended her, and believed in her innocence. Everything seemed to be going well for his client until a firm of jewellers intervened with some damaging evidence against her. Although the matter looked very suspicious, Mrs. Osborne triumphantly exclaimed in court: "Ah! now my innocence will be proved." Upon this Sir Charles Russell, much puzzled by her manner, went with her to her home, and subjected her to a searching cross-examination, which came to its climax in his indignant exclamation: "Woman, you are lying!"

I used this sentence as the climax of my cross-examination scene in "Mrs. Dane." I laid by this scene in my mind for future use. The stealing of a piece of jewellery did not offer a plan for a strong emotional play. I therefore changed it for the stronger motive of a woman fighting desperately to uphold her reputation and retain her lover. This was a very gradual and complicated process, and it was many months before I had evolved the complete scheme as I finally wrote it. I can't give any precise details of how I evolved the scheme in my own mind. It took many different shapes before it assumed the final one, but from the beginning I always had in view the cross-examination scene, with its prolonged agony of the tortured woman, as the great scene of the play. This is, of course, only a particular instance—other plays have grown in other ways. For instance:—

Early in the 'eighties I saw a paragraph in the paper commenting severely on the practices of the Middleman. I thought that would be a good title for a play. A year or two afterwards I saw Willard play an inventor in a play of the late Tom Taylor. I thought that character would be a very effective one in a good scheme, and I linked it with the title "The Middleman." But although I had the theme and the leading character in my mind, I had no play. I fitted the story of "The Middleman" to the character of the inventor and to the title. The theme and the title lay dormant until, by intermittently dwelling upon them, and turning them over, the main story came to my mind, and I worked at it, and filled in the various characters to fit the action.

In this connection the points that are worth dwelling upon are these: that whatever may be the force and insight of your character-drawing, whatever may be the loftiness of your ideas and opinions, until you have smelted them into a story you have no play that will hold a general audience. I would particularly impress these points upon a young dramatist. But a temporary reputation and a momentary success is nearly always to be gained by discovering some new way of boring people in the theatre.

## ON NOT GETTING INTO THE TOWER OF LONDON

SOMETHING having put into my idle head the idle thought that I would visit the Tower, I sought the help of the Underground Railway and came in due time to Mark Lane Station. Not until I was nearly at the top of the steps did two facts which had been floating separately in that same idle head of mine collide. "Bother!" I said, or words to that effect. "It's Sunday, of course, and I can't get into the Tower."

Yet I went on up the steps and out into the dreamy autumn sunshine. They shut the Tower on Sunday, but they cannot hide it; it is not (thank goodness) a thing which can be covered up with a dustcloth. I saw trees before me, brave, shabby London planes, stirred by the breeze into a shimmer of russet-green; above them a tiny Union Jack, its colours jewel-bright, flapped saucily at the great white clouds and the mild September blue; and below the flag and behind the trees there loomed an enormous undefined greyness. This made my heart contract, as it always does, until the outline and features of the fortress grew clear; then at once I was upon familiar terms with them, and as saucy as the flag itself. "Towers of Julius," indeed! Julius Cæsar

had nothing to do with it. If *he* had built the White Tower, its ground-plan would have been a perfect square, instead of being neither square nor anything else. That conviction occupied my mind as I crossed the wide roadway and went down through that meanly modern entrance where the Bulwark Gate used to stand. On my left, not to be approached by me or any other Sunday visitor, stood the neatly labelled Middle Tower, which once shared its island (no island now) with the royal menagerie. I passed it, turned the corner, strolled across Tower Wharf, and found a seat among many other tired and contented old people.

Before us the crisping river ran all gold and diamonds in the sunshine. The breeze came freshly, rather too freshly, from the hazy East. Some of my companions nodded, others wore an introspective smile. I think that, sleeping or waking, each of them was wandering happily in the by-ways of his own dear past. I, on the other hand, was exploring the Tower of London, upon which we had all turned our backs. This is the best way to visit the Tower, for anyone who knows it pretty well: let him place his body on a seat outside, and bid his Imagination enter. Nobody will shout in a parade-ground voice at her, and drive her along the path prescribed by the regulations. She may gaze in peace at the tall planes shedding their leaves on the Green, and the ravens promenading like grave gentlemen of the old school, with bowed backs and enormous heads and spindle-shanks, and wide-skirted coats of black satin shot with purple. These ravens, by the way, seem wickedly appropriate to the place, whereas the pigeons which feed among them look meekly and almost mawkishly unsuitable. Imagination is not afraid of the warders; she can stand before them in childlike confidence—with her finger in her mouth, as it were—and marvel at the lack of harmony between their modern faces and their Tudor garb. Does the fashion of the human countenance, I wonder, change from century to century? Perhaps, unlike that historical enthusiast Mrs. Skewton, you do not dote upon Henry VIII.'s little peepy eyes and benevolent chin; nevertheless, you can hardly deny that his physiognomy somehow matches his costume. (Yet I own that the Earl of Surrey, as pictured at Hampton Court, looks to me like a youth of to-day in magnificent fancy-dress.) Imagination can float up the steps of the Beauchamp Tower, unbruised by solid and determined persons descending, and brood as long as she likes over the two famous "Ianes," which do not stand for the Twelve-Day Queen, and were not carved by that poor young scamp Guildford Dudley. Why, when life was running out so fast, should he waste it over the name of the child-wife with whom he had squabbled about crowns, as children a very little younger squabble about chocolates?

So I let my Imagination roam up and down, from turret to dungeon, from cell to cell, from one age to another and back again. She caught the starlight sparkling frostily on the crozier with which Ranulf Flambard, that agile prelate, climbed down a rope from the Banqueting-Floor of the White Tower. She watched William Seymour, who had sinned beyond forgiveness by marrying the Lady Arabella Stuart, sneak out of St. Thomas's Tower in a wig and a carter's smock. She espied Lord Nithsdale, big and awkward in his wife's attire, stealing at dusk from the door of the King's House, between the two prim little trees in tubs. And with every such escape there arose a vision of a broad back discreetly turned, of a hand held invitingly behind it, of gold being slipped into the unreluctant palm. Now the warm and social fragrance of tobacco was breathed into the air from the sometime "Garden House"; they don't allow smoking in the Tower now, but let us hope that Sir Walter Raleigh was not deprived of his pipe. Now the State apartments, of which Cromwell made an end, stood bathed in a flood of June sunshine; and the gardens under their windows were ablaze with the roses for which the Tower was famous. Now it was May, the nineteenth of May, 1536; and Anne Boleyn knelt upright upon the scaffold, in her chosen robes of gray and red.

Why did she, who was famous for her taste in dress, put on those particular colours for her final pageant? She was a poet in her way, and may have been moved by something better than a common woman's prosaic vanity. Were the roses in bloom so early? Had she seen their first crimson glories against the gray background of the Tower? Or had she, as the world receded and grew little, conceived the idea of the Tower as a tapestry in red and gray; gray for the dragging hours of captivity, red for the moment of violent death? I see it so, whether she did or not; and I also perceive that, being greedy of thrills, we pay too much attention to the red and too little to the gray.

Roughly, therefore, I recalled my Imagination from the straw-covered scaffold before St. Peter-ad-Vincula. I bade her dismiss the crowd which gaped at the Calais headsman in his high horned cap; and wearied itself, no doubt, in wondering where the axe was, till a whisper ran from man to man that no axe was to be used but a sword; which sword (God bless our merciful Lord the King!) lay hidden under the straw that the traitress might be spared the sight of it. "Instead of this," I said, "re-create the life of that young Courtenay who was a prisoner here from eleven years of age to twenty-six. Fifteen times the poor boy watched the Tower roses bloom and fade; then Queen Mary Tudor, of ensanguined memory, released him, and he was good for nothing after all. If that is not a good gray patch of Tower history, I vow that I will search the records till I find one. You must and shall be taught not to be a sensation-monger."

But she slipped away from my scolding to Palm Sunday 1554, and stared at the Princess Elizabeth, young and fierce, white-faced and desperate, seated on a stone by Traitors' Gate. The gray rain whipped the gray river, there was no help or comfort anywhere; and all roads were closed to the prisoner but that which led into the Tower. She might have been amused when her days of peril were over, might perhaps have broken out into one of her "odd, unearthly laughs," if told that in times to come (she had a taste for prophecies) a woman would be sitting quite near that same stone, out of humour because, unlike Queen Bess, she could not get into the Tower on a Sunday.

DOROTHY JOHNSON.

## FROM ALPHA TO OMEGA

IF anyone wishes to see a beautifully intelligent and unified production, let him go to see Mr. Granville Barker's handling of his own "Madras House" at the Ambassadors. Naturally the producer understood what it was all about, but the delight was to feel that each actor did, and was that part years before the play and until death. It would be invidious to pick out any of the major parts, nor are the effective ones necessarily the difficult ones; but Mr. Stafford Hilliard's Brigstock was a gem. It is no good pretending the play is very good: it is four chapters of a novel. But if we do not pass through any experience, we come away feeling that we have had three hours odd of delightful conversation with a charming, cultivated, and very intelligent, if slightly sentimental, man. This may seem rather patronizing towards Mr. Barker, but it is his fault for appealing to no more than one's intellectual apparatus, and for attempting to solve the sexual question by hoping that somehow something somewhere is developing in human consciousness. Moreover, as a play that is only argument, however enlightened, is bound to date, "The Madras House" is already more old-fashioned than "A Doll's House," though it still makes us laugh. It has been suggested to me that the play might be vastly improved by taking us back to Denmark Hill to see Constantine Madras fluttering that dove-cote, instead of leading us on to Dorset Square and the inhibitions of Philip, and I hand the notion on to Mr. Barker.

To have seen Mr. Komissarjevsky's production of "Ivanov" (Stage Society) is to realize at once that both



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as regards Chekhov and his producer we are moving in a different scale of realities from Mr. Barker's. It is no use saying that Mr. Barker is using a different method; that will not do—the values in action are the same in both plays. It was Chekhov's first attempt: he had not quite broken away from the Ibsen mould, and the vaudevillian is still too apparent. But his "centrifugal" method was already there, his personal attitude, his astonishing fairness, which, nevertheless, does not preclude judgment. "I wanted to be original: I did not portray a single villain, not a single angel . . . did not accuse anyone, or exculpate," he wrote to Alex. Chekhov. So far, Mr. Barker might say the same, except as regards the exculpation. Here is the real difference. "I tell you honestly, in all conscience," he wrote to Souvorin, "these men were born in my head, not by accident, not out of sea foam, or preconceived 'intellectual' ideas. They are the result of observing and studying life." As a producer Mr. Komissarjevsky has a power no English one has: he is a master of *tempo*, of *piano* and *forte*, especially of *piano*. With him, as in life, the terrible moments are the quiet ones. But where he most shows his genius is in the way that the eddies rise, now here, now there, and then die away. Not that he ever misses a harsh climax, but anyone can get those. "All my energy," Chekhov wrote, "was spent on a few really brisk, forceful climaxes; but the bridges joining these are insignificant, loose, and not startling." The play was considerably altered, but it was just this "weakness" Chekhov ultimately transformed into a method, one that Mr. Komissarjevsky understands. Mr. Farquharson was most convincing as Ivanov: he gives colour to every part he undertakes, but he was not universally well supported.

"War at Wittenberg," by Mr. A. R. D. Watkins, of King's College, which was presented by the A.D.C. in a triple bill at Cambridge last week, is a religious and philosophical farrago. It is difficult, and perhaps unfair, to judge the play on one hearing and without the text in one's hands. The writing was undoubtedly good. My chief quarrel with Mr. Watkins is that his hero, who represents intellect and reason, takes heaven and immortality for granted. War breaks out at Wittenberg, and the undergraduates of this university of free thought are left by the President to take their own decisions. Valdemar is a conscientious objector; Andreas, his dear friend, would like to fight for the exercise and fun of it; Rinaldo, Valdemar's jealous rival, impersonates the Public School spirit, and fights because it is good form. In a Maeterlinckian dream Valdemar takes Andreas to the lower world, where the souls are judged, and where even Hamlet's soul must abide question. They behold Purgatory, which is as a well with heaven far above; here Julius Caesar yawns, and Iscariot mocks. Back at Wittenberg, Valdemar is forced, like Achilles, to take action when he sees Andreas tortured and bound. The moral seems to be two-fold and familiar: Follow the Gleam: the Heart is mightier than the Head. Throughout, the acting was admirable, the settings and lighting of a different order from anything we have seen at the A.D.C. F. Wormald and C. J. Carruthers in Sheridan's "St. Patrick's Day" (very light, very slight) were most entertaining; but it has too many scenes for a triple bill. Every drop of humour was squeezed from "The Scene that was to Write Itself," by G. D. Gribble, which completed the programme; but it is a fallacious piece.

The demerits of the very long, very exhausting play "Sweet Pepper," by Geoffrey Moss, produced at the Everyman Theatre last week, are so obvious that it would be mere waste of time to discuss them. It is not, however, any worse as a play than the majority of popular film plays, and one can imagine that as a film its Hungarian atmosphere might give it an interest that it lacked on the regular stage. And the cutting out of all the dialogue would be a great improvement. The only merits of the Hampstead performance were the appearance in three of its eight scenes of Mr. Bryan Powley, who was delightful as the vaguest imaginable elderly British staff-

officer, and the acting of Mr. Jack Raine as the conventional stage lover, which was graceful and even convincing.

\* \* \*

My Paris correspondent writes as follows:—

"I forward a letter from M. Kisling, dated, as you will see, from Marseille. It now remains for the secretary of the International to discover that there has been 'a genuine misunderstanding' or to give M. Kisling the lie direct. Should he elect the latter alternative, I counsel him earnestly to keep out of France for the time being, since M. Kisling has a rather formidable reputation as a man who knows how to defend his honour.

Hôtel Nautique,  
7, Quai des Belges, Marseille,  
4 Décembre, 1925.

Cher ami,—Je vous remercie de tout cœur pour l'empressement que vous avez mis pour défendre un point d'une question un peu internationale entre ce monsieur le secrétaire et moi. Ce monsieur se croit sûrement ministre par la facilité de démentir par un simple communiqué. Je ne voyage pas avec les lettres de ce monsieur, mais ma mémoire de jeune homme (ne riez pas) ne me trompe pas, et j'affirme que j'ai répondu à l'invitation charmante du secrétaire pour exposer le nu exposé au Salon des Indépendants, que ce nu je l'avais vendu, mais que je pourrais envoyer d'autres tableaux. J'affirme catégoriquement que j'ai reçu une réponse du secrétaire en me remerciant et en me donnant la date de l'envoi. J'affirme que dans la deuxième lettre du secrétaire il n'y avait pas de question de refus d'autres tableaux, et je proteste de toutes mes forces contre les allégations de ce monsieur. Vous comprenez bien, cher ami, que vraiment il faut être fou quand on ne veut pas de vous quelque part de vouloir forcer la porte. Ce n'est sûrement pas mon cas, puisque je peux exposer et j'expose dans des Salons autrement intéressants que celui de ces messieurs de l'Internationale. Vous pouvez user de cette lettre comme il vous plaira. Je vous quitte en vous souhaitant bonne réussite dans votre légère grippe, qui est sûrement déjà partie.—A vous,

vosre KISLING."

\* \* \*

Things to see or hear in the coming week:—

- Saturday, December 12.—William Murdoch, Piano Recital, at 3, at Wigmore Hall.  
Orchestral Concert for Children, at 11, at Central Hall.  
Watercolours and Etchings, by W. Walcot, at Beaux Arts Gallery.  
Sunday, December 13.—A. Fenner Brockway on "New World Civilization," at 5, at Indian Students' Union.  
Wycherley's "The Gentleman Dancing Master," Phoenix Society, at the Regent.  
"L'Ecole des Cocottes," Play Actors, at Prince's.  
Monday, December 14.—Bernard Shaw's "Misalliance," Lena Ashwell Players, at the Century.  
Mr. Brandane's "The Lifting," at Q Theatre.  
Dolmetsch Recital, at 8, at New Chenil Galleries (and on 15th and 16th).  
John Goss, Van Dieren Concert, at 8.30, at Wigmore Hall.  
Tuesday, December 15.—"Don't Tell Timothy," at the New Scala.  
Oriana Madrigal Society Concert, at 8.15, at Æolian Hall.  
Sir Frederick Pollock on "Do we need a Philosophy of Law in England?", British Institute of Philosophical Studies, at 8.15, at London School of Economics.  
Thursday, December 17.—"Peter Pan," at the Shaftesbury.  
John Coates, Song Recital, at 8.15, at New Chenil Galleries.  
Friday, December 18.—Cecil Bonvalot and Adolphe Hallis, Sonata Concert, at 8.15, at Wigmore Hall.

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# CONSTABLE

## THE WORLD OF BOOKS

## THE NEW ART OF BIOGRAPHY

**I** DO not apologize for returning so often on this page to the subject of biography. A noble attempt is being made at the moment by a heterogeneous company of talented writers to make almost a new art of biography. We live in an age in which, it appears to be generally accepted, the literary constitution is not very strong or healthy; the old gentleman, who was born somewhere in the time of Chaucer, is somewhat exhausted, not to say feverish or even delirious. Poetry has become catalogic or unintelligible; the essay has been killed by the article; the novel, where it is not machine-made for the circulating library, is perilously near dissolution; only Mr. Shaw stands between the play and complete extinction; while, as for history and scientific or learned books, it seems to be accepted that a marriage between literature and learning is not eugenic, and that the common reader will not read a serious book nor the expert a well-written one. In these lamentable circumstances, there has been a marked movement towards biography, and a young writer, with serious aspirations, who twenty-five years ago would have looked to the novel or poetry, is now tempted to follow in Mr. Strachey's footsteps.

The movement began with "Eminent Victorians"—since then we have had Mr. Harold Nicolson's books, Mr. Scott's "Zélide," Mr. Somervell's political biographies, and several other experiments. Now we have "Essays in Biography, 1680-1726," by Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford University Press, 12s. 6d.), which is part of the same movement. It is an admirable book, not, perhaps, as easy to read nor as obviously amusing as some of the others, but a genuine attempt to make biography a department of real literature. Mr. Dobrée would, I think, not have written this book exactly in its present form if "Eminent Victorians" had never been written. But he is only in the vaguest or purely temporal sense a follower of Mr. Strachey. He writes in a style of his own, and though, like all the modern school of biographers, he never lets an opportunity slip when a great man—or even a small one—has made a fool of himself, he is much less afraid than most of his co-experimenters of being serious and of not having a dig or a joke in every sentence. This is getting to be a rare merit, for the revolt against boredom is going so far that an amusing sentence will soon be boring and a boring sentence amusing. Mr. Dobrée will, I believe, write an even better book when he also loses the fear of being simple or stupid. He is so erudite, and naturally thinks of so many interesting and "bright" things to say, that there is no necessity for him to force the pace, as in fact he often does. It is a mistake to write sentences like—

"If the fructifying influence of the nineteenth century ripened society into clusters of edifying grape, it is only fitting that the age of Anne should have produced at least one Addison,"

or

"But telling most heavily against his forming any friendship on terms of parity was his need of self-reclusion."

Some of the best passages in the book are those in which Mr. Dobrée is content to be quite simple and direct in his statements. A golden rule for the clever writer is to try every now and then to be as simple and unliterary as possible. He will not succeed, but he will improve his style and his book.

Mr. Dobrée's book consists of three essays, one on Sir George Etherege, one on Vanbrugh, and one on Addison. All three are very good subjects. In each case he has tried not merely to give the facts of a man's life or to "interpret" his character, but to write the facts and the interpretation into an essay, a work of art. The first essay is the least successful. That on Vanbrugh is the most solid and the best written, and it gains something because Mr. Dobrée obviously likes and sympathizes with Vanbrugh. The modern school of biographers tend to take subjects or victims from among the least sympathetic of famous men, and it is rather pleasant, for a change, to find anyone bold enough to write about a thoroughly charming man and not to prove him the opposite. The last essay, on Addison, is the most interesting, because Addison's character is far more subtle and curious than either Etherege's or Vanbrugh's. Etherege was little more than a seventeenth-century rake; Vanbrugh was one of the simplest of men. But Addison was extremely complex, and Mr. Dobrée's explanation of him as the first "Victorian" is both ingenious and illuminating.

In his preface Mr. Dobrée raises a question of great importance to this modern attempt to make an art of biography. He defends the practice of writing biography "as it were autobiographically," of describing the events in the lives of his subjects from their own point of view. In theory, the practice is defensible, though in Mr. Dobrée's own book the least successful parts are those in which he most definitely gives what he imagines to have been his subjects' thoughts upon particular events or incidents. And in practice there is a very great danger, which he recognizes, that of "distortion for the purposes of art, of sacrificing the humdrum likeness for the sake of contrast." It is interesting to note that in the new and abridged edition of "The Life of Florence Nightingale," by Sir Edward Cook (Macmillan, 15s.), just published, Mrs. Nash writes an appendix in which she accuses Mr. Strachey of this distortion and of deliberately suppressing, exaggerating, and inventing facts. Mr. Strachey will, presumably, defend himself, for the point is one of real importance to the future of this biographical art. The question of truth or fact is vital to this art in a way in which it is not vital to the novel or the drama. If a writer says in effect: "It is popularly believed that certain people had a certain character and lived in a certain way; this is a fallacy; their lives and characters were quite different, and I am going to tell you what they were," then it is essential to the artistic whole, to "the work of art," that the facts should be true and the characters real. The point simply evaporates if the subjects never did or thought or felt what Mr. Strachey or Mr. Dobrée tells us they did, thought, or felt. This is only another way of saying that in biography reality is an integral part of the artistic form, and that, therefore, distortion or invention of facts is instantly fatal to it as a work of art. As far as I am able to judge, Mr. Dobrée himself is scrupulously accurate, and I feel sure that Mr. Strachey will be able to prove himself the same, but there have been other cases in which the biographers have certainly not escaped this danger.

LEONARD WOOLF.



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## REVIEWS

## WILLIAM BLAKE

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**William Blake in this World.** By HAROLD BRUCE. (Cape. 12s. 6d.)

**William Blake.** By ERNEST H. SHORT. British Artists Series. (Philip Allan. 5s.)

**William Blake.** By A. C. SWINBURNE. Golden Pine Edition. (Heinemann. 4s.)

To a Blakeite of the pre-Gilchristian era, who was never told, or (which in those early years might have been still more effective) told *not*, to like Blake, it is a very pleasing thing, nearer seventy than sixty years afterwards, to receive on one day and in one packet, four books devoted to the author of "The Mad Song" and the "Descriptive Catalogue," which were originally his Galeotti. Of the reprint of Mr. Swinburne's book (which at its first appearance preached in this case to a converted) there is no need to say much, except to give it a hearty welcome. It is almost unnecessary to admit that it contains not a few of its author's faults; it is almost enough to add that it exhibits very many of its author's merits. It is certainly one of the best examples of one period of flamboyant English prose; and one is not quite sure that, in the doubtful and dangerous business of attempting to interpret Blake, there has been anything much better. At any rate in these days of book-prices, people are certainly to be congratulated on being able to put it comfortably in their pockets for a couple of florins.

Nor is it needful to expatiate on, though one certainly need not discommend, the two smaller of the new handlings before us. Mr. Short's gives a sufficient biography and a very interesting exposition of Blake's methods and accomplishment as a draughtsman, engraver, and painter—an exposition which seems to have had the good fortune, at least partly, to placate the scruples of the general editor of the series. Mr. Short is rather hard on the poor nineteenth century, which, after all, if in its green, unknowing youth it thought and indeed knew little of Blake, did just a little, also, to make up for this some time before it died. But it is very satisfactory to know that the twentieth is much better qualified to appreciate him. One's only complaint is that Mr. Short says next to nothing about Blake the poet; and it is no answer that he is only concerned with the painter, for he devotes a large space to the prophet. As for Mr. Bruce, his book is original; it is, when one gets over some rather "thorn-crackling" satire on predecessors, amusing enough, and it will be really valuable to neophytes for its abundance of quotation, not merely from printed sources, as well as for the way in which the biographical facts are strung together with a certain liveliness. Both these books have illustrations: Mr. Short's eight including some very well-chosen contrasts—the exquisite "Creation of Eve" and the formidable "Death on a Pale Horse," the glorious "Glad Day" (wanting, however, its amazing colour), and the sombre "Hecate." Mr. Bruce could hardly have selected anything better for his frontispiece than that very Blakian "I want! I want!" with the ladder to the moon, and the climber, and the enigmatical couple of bystanders. The others are portraits of Blake, &c.

Not thus rapidly must we dismiss the beautiful quarto which is at once a relic of its author and contriver, demanding a *sunt lacrimæ rerum*, and a most admirable and desirable tribute to its subject. For once here is a book which lives up to its title. There are rather more than a hundred pages of "letterpress" of the usual bio-bibliocritico-hermeneutic kind, but holding, we think, a decidedly high place among the volumes, in both senses, of such stuff (in both senses likewise) which have been written about Blake since his resurrection. Like almost everybody else, Mr. Figgis could not keep clear of that loadstone rock, the question "Was Blake mad?"—a question absolutely irrelevant to the real questions. Was Blake a lyric poet, who at his best wrote perfect lyric? Was Blake a designer who could represent grace and terror, simplicity and mystery, quiet and violence, motion and rest?—who could manipulate colour, if not always wisely or securely, with incomparable effect? And these questions answered, there comes

the final one of all Art, in words or sounds, in colour or line—Has Blake given to those who can enjoy him an enjoyment which they can find nowhere else?

If these questions are answered in the negative way, it really does not seem to be worth while asking whether Blake was mad or not. He is not alive to be put into a "mental hospital," and it is perfectly easy not to read his poems or look at his drawings or pictures. If they can be answered in the affirmative—as, for his part, this humble compurgator can on the honour and conscience of his taste and judgment answer them—it matters almost less. Did the madness help the production? Thank the Lord for that. It certainly did not prevent that production. Thank the Lord all the more for that. Either way—Enjoy, and thank the Lord more than ever.

Now, as for the Poems, Mr. Sampson put that part of the business in proper order some time ago. One would, indeed, like to have Poems and Prophetic Books together in a plain, cheap text, like the Globe or the Oxford Poets, with the fewest possible notes, a reasonable biographical and critical introduction, but no systematizing or theorizing about the Prophecies. One would thus have Blake, on these sides of him, as a whole. But on the third side it is very difficult to have him in any satisfactory way. The bulk of known matter is considerable, and very widely scattered; its proprietors, though often, are not always amiable; exact reproduction of the whole would be very expensive; and yet there are hardly any two pieces—one may doubt whether there are any twenty or two hundred pieces—which by themselves exhaust Blake's infinite variety.

The presentation in the book before us of a "Blake Gallery" is by far the most satisfactory we have seen. It gives a hundred plates, sixteen in colour, the rest in collotype black-and-white, or grey, if anyone prefers it. Many of these would appear to be reproduced for the first time, and the whole constitutes, in respect of subject, treatment, and visible or visual effect alike, such an exhibition as few artists have had allowed them. The contrasts of which we spoke above are revealed at their fullest. It opens with the amazing "Ancient of Days," as to which one alternately wonders at the colouring, the "set" of the figure, and the positive "expression" which Blake has managed to put on a pair of plain steel, if possibly white-hot, compasses. The next coloured one—after seven or eight "plain" reproductions, which serve as a sort of rest, though every one has its own interest—is Lord Leconfield's "Satan Calling Up his Legions"—as amazing as the other in its different way of murky smoulder instead of glowing blaze. "The Elohim Creating Adam" requires perhaps more study than the other two—Blake's marvellous quiet comes into it, though there is action. But to go through the century, coloured or plain, is of course impossible. There is not one that could be rejected, and hardly one that could be exchanged. Perhaps Blake is not so successful with the Lady in "Comus" as with "Eve," or even with the possibly naughty but very attractive "Nymphs," whom he has depicted as waitresses on the Temptation Banquet; but one needs no great acquaintance with his principles to explain that. Nor does he fall into the disappointing even here. In fact, Blake never disappoints, anywhere, anyone who is born with the faculty to appreciate him. One of our authors, enthusiast as he is in the main, discovers "pretty unreality" and even "nearness to vulgarity" in some things. But he is an art critic by profession; the present modest writer is not. He would say that, far from faultless as Blake is, these two particular faults were utterly absent. However, let us not end with anything like quarrelsomeness.

The lust of the eyes is clearly not always a bad thing, though, like almost all things, it may be abused. It certainly may be quite innocently exercised on such work as Blake's—prodigal as he is of "nudes." And there is hardly any likelihood of such opportunity for its innocent exercise, in company with a sufficient but not excessive indulgence in intellectual comment, being provided elsewhere in Christmas Books this year. Every genius is more or less of a "tally"—you must provide the completing part yourself, and can't buy it at any third person's shop. Nor is there any fuller example of this truth than William Blake, whether you take him as Poet, Prophet, Painter, or, which is the best way, as all three together.

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**An Economic History of Russia.** By JAMES MAVOR. New Edition. 2 vols. (Dent. 36s.)

PROFESSOR MAVOR'S "Economic History of Russia" is still almost the only reliable account of Russian social development in the English language. In bringing out a new edition the author has not attempted to continue his narrative up to the present day. He has been content to add a few sentences noting the fact that the autocracy of Russia, whose history he had traced through centuries of cruelty and misrule, "fell suddenly and hopelessly because of its own inherent weakness. There was a revolutionary state of mind among the people; but the autocracy fell not by a revolutionary onslaught, it crumbled to pieces." This judgment is amply confirmed by M. Makeev and Mr. O'Hara, who, after summarizing earlier Russian history, deal at length with the period of the European war, the fall of Tsardom, and the establishment of Bolshevik rule. Both these books bear out the testimony of numerous first-hand observers that to have expected Tsardom to reform itself was to have been blind to the nature and conditions of its existence, and that it was also impossible for a moderate Constitutional régime to survive in a country where the mass of the people had always been completely isolated from political activity and where the aristocracy was both reckless and irresponsible. Established systems of government last everywhere as long as they carry out their functions with any degree of success: Tsardom lingered on until its incompetence was nothing short of fantastic. The Kornilov revolt gave the Bolsheviks their opportunity and made a tyranny of some sort inevitable. The remarkable thing was that the Bolsheviks succeeded not only in seizing power, but in consolidating it, and this achievement was largely due to the character of Lenin. It is the combination of religious concentration of purpose with a surprisingly supple opportunism in action which marks him as one of the great statesmen of history.

The account given by M. Makeev and Mr. O'Hara of the revolution is followed by a well-informed description of the economic and social effects of Bolshevik policy. From a preface by the Master of New College we gather that M. Makeev is a Russian and a member of the Social Revolutionary Party, and suffered imprisonment from the Tsarist Government. Mr. O'Hara, it seems, is a business man who, after a long experience of Russia, was imprisoned by the Bolsheviks, and afterwards served in the British political mission to the Baltic States in 1919. It is obvious, as Mr. Fisher says, that they are anxious to tell the truth about Russia. The defect of their book is a certain lack of imaginative power. They have sometimes been content to judge Bolshevism by the immediate material success of its economic policy. They describe the failure of Communism to establish the promised "economic justice," and they equally condemn the New Economic Policy as a "complete and tragic failure." Without entering into a discussion of the economic justification for these judgments, it may be noted that they have not considered the more interesting question of whether the Bolsheviks may not be right in considering it worth while, if necessary, to sacrifice some material benefits in return for other advantages. They do not ask whether, in view of the very unstable condition of most so-called Capitalist countries, where everything is done to emphasize and encourage the acquisitive side of human conduct, it may not be worth while to risk something in trying to construct a community in which private wealth is a disgrace rather than a glory. The most doctrinaire Communists have not looked for change in the fundamental assumptions of a society to take place immediately, and, even in theory, success could not be more than partial until the children of to-day, trained to accept the new view that all distinctions based on wealth or birth are vile, had taken the place of a generation in which the assumptions of a class society are

dominant. It may be that such a hope is in any case illusory and that the Bolsheviks are destined to fail in their educational experiment, but it is a real defect in writing about Russia not to take these vital issues into account. In their last pages, it is true, M. Makeev and Mr. O'Hara become for a moment speculative, and sum up their difficulty by saying: "We know perhaps too much about the present régime in Russia. About the new forces we know too little." The new forces, they hope, are making for "the complete restoration to health of Russia politically, economically, and culturally," and they seem to envisage a time when Russia will become a Federal, democratic and, apparently, Capitalist State—in fact, an Eastern edition of the United States. One may doubt if such a consummation could be accurately described as a "restoration to health." Perhaps these authors are right: it may be that they know too little of the forces forming the Russia of the future.

About the unpleasant side of present-day Russia there can be no dispute. Bolshevik theory has always insisted that a considerable period must elapse during which liberty is rigorously restricted, and the Bolsheviks are people with the courage of their convictions. The end to them justifies means which are undeniably deplorable. Mr. Hullinger has had adventures in Russia. He is a journalist, and has made the most of his opportunities. His passage of arms with the Cheka is an excellent illustration of its methods.

Miss Goldman has been all her life a revolutionary anarchist, and after her deportation from America entered Russia full of enthusiasm for a revolution she seems completely to have misunderstood. Disillusionment was inevitable. She seems to have expected that the destruction of Tsardom would leave the way open for the free community of voluntary associations of which she and Prince Kropotkin had so often dreamt. In this sincere account of her two years in Russia we find increasing anger and horror as she gradually realizes that the actual methods by which harassed Governments maintain themselves are much the same before and after revolutions. She shudders to find that fraud, tyranny, and self-seeking exist in Russia, as they do in America; that State tyranny is always ugly, and that her anarchist friends are outlawed and imprisoned by the Bolsheviks almost as they had been under Tsardom. Perhaps most interesting of all is her account of Makhno, the daring anarchist leader in the Ukraine, who had aided the Bolsheviks in defending the revolution against its enemies, and who then attempted to withstand equally the dominion of his late allies. English readers, too, will welcome her account of Prince Kropotkin, written a few months before his death, of the serenity and hopefulness of his outlook, and of the great gathering which attended his funeral, in spite of the hostility of the Bolshevik Government.

Miss Goldman's narrative is transparently truthful, and she has had unusual opportunities of observation. Her judgments, however, often seem to flow from a full heart rather than a clear head. She is at her best in her last pages, where she sets forth her indictment of the State and pleads for the recognition of the "libertarian ideal." She is at the heart of the controversy when she declares that "revolution is in vain unless inspired by its ultimate ideal. Revolutionary methods must be in tune with revolutionary aims. The means used to further the revolution must harmonize with its purposes. In short, the ethical values which the revolution is to establish in the new society must be initiated with the revolutionary activities of the so-called transitional period." The Bolshevik answer to this is clear enough. In times of crisis it is the will to power which wins, and to have adopted Miss Goldman's ethical creed would have handed Russia over to the counter-revolutionaries. Indeed, Miss Goldman must choose. It was impossible both to retain command of Russia and to keep clean hands. It is probable that the Bolsheviks have imitated the methods of Tsardom with unnecessary fidelity, but there can be no doubt that, in any case, the unscrupulous would have ruled and the idealists witnessed to their faith in prison. Obscurity and imprisonment are the natural lot of the anarchist Christian: this does not mean that he is wrong, but only that he prefers outward failure with an untarnished faith to material success at the price it demands.

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## LITERARY ESSAYS

**Collected Essays of W. P. Ker.** Edited by CHARLES WHIBLEY. 2 vols. (Macmillan, 25s.)

**The Background of English Literature.** By H. J. C. GRIERSON. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.)

**Critical Essays.** By OSBERT BURDETT. (Faber & Gwyer. 7s. 6d.)

THE late Professor Ker, a list of whose academic and other distinctions would fill a third of the space at our disposal, described himself as being "one of the captains of a band of adventurers, whose province is the ocean of stories, the Fortunate Isles of romance, kingdoms of wonders beyond the furthest part of the voyage of Argo." He died, in his sixty-eighth year, while climbing at Macugnaga, in July, 1923—a fitting end, some may think, to a long career which was certainly adventurous, even for a Scotsman. He was, indeed, a wanderer in two realms—the geographical and the intellectual. "You constantly heard of him," says Mr. Whibley, in his introduction, "travelling north and south and east—never west—and you knew that he was adding always to the vast knowledge which he won easily and carried lightly." It was Ker's mission in life to mitigate "the curse of Babel," which, though it does not affect the other arts, breaks up "the light of poetry" among the various languages. Much as he deplored the time thus expended, he acquired, in his journeyings, almost every European tongue, from that of Iceland to that of Spain; and it is his gift for comparing literatures, and for illuminating one through the light from another, that gives to these lectures and essays no small part of their interest and charm.

Like many men of vast learning, Ker was not a fundamentally original thinker. But, though an uncompromising Tory in literature as in politics, he was sturdily opposed to "labels" of every kind. Taking as his text, for example, the common tag about "having too much imagination and too little judgment," he weaves around it a sermon on the impossibility of having judgment *without* imagination. He warns us, elsewhere, against looking for Romance where "the professional agents of the romantic school have 'opened up' the country," and reminds us that even the eighteenth century (in defence of which he writes one of his best essays) retained the "old immemorial traditions of popular romance" which the nineteenth century, despite its "Romantic Revival," broke up:—

"Few revolutions or changes of general habit have been more important than that which cut off the old romantic popular traditions of folk-lore and ballads in the nineteenth century, and put modern educational textbooks in their place. This means a change in the minds of civilized human beings, making them unlike all their ancestors. They learn nothing now in the way that all generations, including those of the enlightened eighteenth century, learned their ballads and fairy-stories. These things may come to them by way of books; they do not come as part of their real life, from the mouth of their nurse or grandmother."

That passage is characteristic of Ker's outlook and (not faultless) style. It is obvious, however, that no single quotation can give an adequate idea of the scope of these two volumes, which range over many countries and many ages. Ker, however, does not work out his themes exhaustively and logically. He touches them here and there at unexpected, but revealing, angles. Curiosity, enthusiasm, observation, memory, and good humour: these are the prevailing qualities in his writing, which flows on like eager, spontaneous conversation, scholarly yet warm-blooded.

Professor Grierson, also an erudite but light-hearted writer, shares many of Ker's points of view. Like Ker, he quarrels with the conventional interpretations of the terms "classical" and "romantic," and offers new definitions of his own. He shares Ker's enthusiasm for "Don Quixote" and for Byron, though he speaks less glowingly of Tennyson and Browning, whom he pictures as "timidly keeping the bathing-machine of an orthodox and optimistic faith well in sight upon the beach as a shelter to run to for safety and warmth and reinvigoration." Finally, though with a lesser degree of pessimism, Professor Grierson joins with Ker in asking what is likely to be the influence upon letters of popular education, which has destroyed the Biblical and Classical background that once "united the poet and his audience" in a "common tradition of knowledge and feeling."

Popular education is also criticized—or rather anathematized—by Mr. Osbert Burdett, who laments that "the effect of printing on literature has been to turn an art into an industry, an aid to training into a branch of commerce." There are no doubts or fine shades in Mr. Burdett's assertive philosophy, rooted in his love for mediævalism. But he is so vigorous and good-natured that we are carried along happily enough from "George Meredith" to "The Passion Play," and from "Peacock the Epicurean" to "Shelley the Dramatist." In this last essay Mr. Burdett suggests that "The Cenci" was intended to form the second part—"Prometheus Unbound" being the first—of a trilogy on the Greek model, and that the Count symbolizes those human institutions, such as "the State, the Law, the Army," which "become Molochs when we worship them, and like Molochs devour their own children." Despite its title, however, this book contains more appreciation than criticism or speculation. It has not the importance of Mr. Burdett's other works, but is a sprightly and companionable little volume.

## A SENSIBLE CRITIC

**The Well-Tempered Musician.** By FRANCIS TOYE. With a Preface by HUGH WALPOLE. (Methuen. 5s.)

THIS is an admirable book. It ought to be read by every teacher of music; by every man or woman responsible in any way for the production of music, whether in concert hall, café, or cathedral; by every puzzled listener who finds his instincts at war with his upbringing, and by every performer of music, professional and amateur alike. And the pity of it is that the very people who ought to read it will probably pass it by, on the ground that, since it does not provide them with interesting facts about great musicians as grist to the mill of their culture, it can have no permanent value. It is frankly journalism, but of the highest quality. And journalism, since it has been expelled by news from the more popular of our journals, can now count on finding a public only in the theatre.

Mr. Toye makes delicious fun of the conventional classification of music as serious and light, sacred and profane, classical and modern, and asserts that really there are only two categories, good and bad. But this unity in music does not imply that all music appeals to the same part of our nature. It is true that some works are more serious than others, but what offends Mr. Toye—and very many besides—is the assumption that they are therefore better music. He denounces those false friends who think they can uphold the dignity of the art by claiming for it a "high moral purpose" and an "educational mission," and again we are all with him.

Mr. Toye seems to accept what might be described as the "Alice through the looking-glass" theory of history, according to which progress consists in running as fast as you can in order to stay in the same place. "I do not think," he writes, "that it can be proved that music has ever exercised an effect on men either different in kind or noticeably different in degree. . . . Stravinsky's 'Sacre du Printemps' drives a contemporary audience only to the same ecstasy as is induced by one primitive drum in an Oriental dervish." Familiarity makes the old tricks grow stale, and the artist must tell a new story every night, or lose his head. He must change his methods to get the same effect, and the symphony succeeds the tom-tom, as the pipe succeeds the "comforter."

This theory accounts for the contempt that each generation feels for the tastes of its predecessor, but it does not quite explain why we so often find that we are "in love again with the one before the last." It also suggests what is the matter with the moderns. They are trying to move too fast. They do not wait for the public to learn their language before they fly off after a new experiment. The result is that both they and their audiences are so absorbed in the change of method that they forget about the content. We are grateful to Mr. Toye for voicing an opinion that many of us have secretly cherished, but have been afraid to acknowledge for fear of being dubbed hopeless reactionaries.

That there is much more for which we are grateful to him, everyone will discover for himself by reading this excellent little book.



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## ANGLO-CATHOLICISM

**Anglo-Catholicism.** By SHEILA KAYE-SMITH. (Chapman & Hall. 7s. 6d.)

**Anglicanism: An Introduction to its History and Philosophy.** By Canon CARNEGIE. (Putnam. 7s. 6d.)

THE author of "Anglo-Catholicism" is an accomplished novelist, the quality and tone of whose work offers a happy contrast to that of much recent fiction. Her ecclesiastical sympathies are familiar to her readers; and this study of the advanced Anglican position is characterized by clearness of conception and urbanity of style. Detachment of view is, perhaps, not to be expected. It was said of Macaulay that he kept by him two pots of paint, white for Whigs and black for Tories. Miss Kaye-Smith is open to a similar criticism. Was Archbishop Tait really a "persecuting Bishop"? And can it be seriously said that Anglo-Catholics are the victims of a "No-Preferment campaign which continues to the present day"? Their prominence in the Church is out of all proportion to their numbers. The training of the clergy is in their hands: they control the theological colleges: they hold both the Oxford Divinity Chairs: they have revolutionized the chapel services at Cambridge: they "squeeze the bishops," who, with few exceptions, come to heel at their call. Like Joseph, they are "set over all the land of Egypt; and they cry before them, 'Bow the knee.'" Their Achilles' heel is their hatred of learning: *La science, voilà l'ennemi*.

"The enemy, from the start down to the present day, has been Latitudinarianism, or Modernism. . . . One by one the Ecclesia Anglicana has driven Calvinism, Deism, and Continental Protestantism out of her system, and no doubt she will deal in the same way with the present-day Modernism."

It is this essential intolerance which makes the Round Table Conferences, so dear to the official Anglican mind, futile. The two theologies, the scientific and the traditional, are contradictory; and the problem before the Church is their co-existence, which is a necessity, if a temporary one, not their reconciliation, which is an impossibility, and not in the nature of things.

A correct account is given of the origin of the Enabling Act of 1919. It was supported by Anglo-Catholics in the hope that it would deprive the Crown of its ecclesiastical patronage, and by certain Evangelicals and Broad Churchmen in the expectation that it would give the laity a voice in the direction of the Church. It has done neither. What it has done is to expose the nakedness of the land—the small number of laymen who are sufficiently interested in the matter to enter their names on the parochial rolls, and to take part in the nominally representative bodies based upon those enrolments. Of Prayer-Book Revision Miss Kaye-Smith says, with truth, that neither Anglo-Catholics nor Evangelicals desired it. The former saw in it what they described as "trumpety Protestant tinkering"; the latter feared that the changes made would be in a mediævalizing direction, which seems likely to be the case. The movement is an official one.

"Only those who might be described as 'Central Churchmen,' especially the members of the 'Life and Liberty' party, wished for revision; and the power of that party has grown enormously of late."

The reason of its success is the indifference of the normal man. He has ceased to go to church, and is content to leave the services to those who attend and hold them. The attitude has a surface plausibility; but it is difficult to defend a Church Establishment on such grounds.

Certain sanguine bishops look forward to a reign of law under the revised rubrics. *Rusticus expectat*: not Omnipotence itself could frame a law which the clergy would obey. Meanwhile, confusion borders on anarchy.

"Some Bishops forbid Devotions (before the Reserved Sacrament); others even attempt to interfere with the canonical duty of Reservation. The use of the Asperges is rare; on the other hand, the service of Benediction is widely used in the modified form in which it is tolerated in some dioceses."

Indeed, in a comparatively small number of churches, we find not only Benediction, but "the Latin Mass and Communion in one kind."

A recent writer has pointed out that the strength of Anglo-Catholicism is not intellectual, but spiritual; and Miss Kaye-Smith lays stress on the revival of the "religious" life among men and women, as well as on the observance of Missions, Retreats, and Quiet Days. The party is enthusiastic, adroit, and well organized; its propaganda is being carried on under cover of religion by the Anglo-Catholic Congresses, by the Fiery Cross movement, and by mission preachers in the great towns. The professed aim is the Conversion of England. It is one with which many will sympathize. But when the question what England is to be converted to is considered, difference of opinion will arise. And apart from this, the schematization of spirituality is open to abuse. We have learned little from the past if we are blind to the dangers inseparable from monasticism; and the stereotyped *cadres* of the Retreat and the Mission are not for all. If they are helps to some, they are hindrances to others; and it would be a disaster to religion were they to become with us what they have become in modern Roman Catholicism—a bed of Procrustes on which all sorts and conditions of men are stretched.

The shadow of secession to Rome hangs over Anglo-Catholicism, as that of insanity hangs over certain families; in each case there is a predisposition which is liable to find expression in overt act. For many the Church of Rome has the same kind of attraction which the Jewish Church had for the first generation of Christians; it has the prestige of antiquity; its emotional appeal is strong and persistent; it is "in the grand style." Miss Kaye-Smith reassures waverers by the assurance that the special difficulty or danger which has given rise to secession "has invariably righted itself in the course of a few years." On this head, Canon Carnegie, writing of Newman, the most distinguished of the seceders, is more convincing.

"The clear-cut theories of Romanism, its highly articulated system of doctrine and practice, its unqualified claim to be the sole guardian and exponent of absolute truth, impressed and fascinated him. He disregarded or explained away the testimony, writ large on its page of history, that behind its imposing exterior lie the prison houses of liberty and the lethal chambers of sincerity. The Roman Church which attracted him was largely a creation of his own idealizing faculty. He sought the city of his dreams in the realm of reality. Its relation to existing facts was little closer than that of Rousseau's State of Nature to the facts of primitive life."

A. F.

## ON THE EDITOR'S TABLE

Two Napoleonic books are "Napoleonic Anecdotes," by Louis Cohen (Holden, 12s. 6d.), and "Bernadotte, Prince and King, 1810-1844," by Sir Plunket Barton (Murray, 12s.). Another very important historical biography just published is "Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth," by Conyers Read (Oxford: Clarendon Press, three vols., 63s.). Among other biographies may be noted "Cobbett," by G. K. Chesterton (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.); "E. T. Busk, A Pioneer of Flight," with a short memoir of H. A. Busk, by Mary Busk (Murray, 7s. 6d.); "Some Records of the Wingfield Family," by Lt.-Col. John M. Wingfield, D.S.O. (Murray, 10s. 6d.). The anonymous "Romances of Mayfair" (Stanley Paul, 12s. 6d.) deals, as the publishers explain, with the "inner history of many remarkable affairs that have surprised society during recent years." "China and the West, a Sketch of their Inter-course" (Oxford University Press, 10s. 6d.), contains the substance of six lectures by the Professor of Chinese at Oxford, W. E. Soothill. "Women in Ancient India, Moral and Literary Studies," by Clarisse Bader (Kegan Paul, 10s. 6d.), is a new volume in Trubner's Oriental Series.

"Quaint Specimens," by "Evoe" (E. V. Knox) (Methuen, 6s.), is another collection of Mr. Knox's light verse and humorous essays.

Two books dealing with religion or Church history are "Sacrifice in the Old Testament, its Theory and Practice," by George Buchanan Gray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 16s.), and "A History of the Mediæval Church, 590-1500," by Margaret Deanesly (Methuen, 7s. 6d.). Lord Charnwood's "According to Saint John" (Hodder & Stoughton, 10s. 6d.) has also just been published.



# THE ATTACK ON DAMASCUS

has added to the difficulties of our work for Armenian Relief.

Our General Secretary, just returned from BEYROUT, BAGDAD AND MOSUL, has personally witnessed the acute need for immediate help and succour.

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Our work for BABIES has been the means of saving thousands of lives. This we will be unable to carry on without additional funds. To those who love little children we say, CAN YOU AFFORD TO ALLOW THESE CHILDREN TO PASS OUT?

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"Wild Animals on the Films," by Joseph Delmont (Methuen, 6s.), is an interesting book, translated from the German, dealing with the staging of films in which animals have played a principal part.

Mr. John Murray republishes two books by A. C. Benson: "The House of Quiet" (5s.) and "The Thread of Gold" (5s.), and also publishes "A Thought for Every Day," selected from his works (3s. 6d.).

## NOVELS IN BRIEF

**Storm Dust.** By CONSTANCE SMITH. (Melrose 7s. 6d.)

It is impossible not to feel interest in Miss Smith's novels, each of which shows clearly that she is striving towards a satisfying creation of tragedy. She has indeed supped full with horrors, and one soon recognizes her pet theme—a group of tiresomely over-sexed men and women whose hatreds, aversions, and lusts can fill some particular house with goblin spirits of evil. Similar spirits usually attack the house from without. In "Storm Dust" it is the pagan, earthy spirit of a Surrey hill which fights against the rich woman's desire to erect upon its slopes a colony of vulgarly conceived bungalows. It is a pity that Miss Smith still fails to understand that nothing can be so comic as some presentations of tragedy, for in her work there is always some power and alertness which deserves attention. Her characters are too highly coloured. Even the figure of Ruby, the little housemaid who has to stand for forgiveness, charity, and every virtue, is over-idealized. The world has more energies at work in it than lust and boredom, and if the realization of this could be united to serenity, Miss Smith would write a very moving story.

\* \* \*

**As the Stars Come Out.** By NETTA SYRETT. (Hutchinson. 7s. 6d.)

Miss Syrett's work has become more banal and machine-made since she wrote "The Victorians," but it may be that her better writing all goes to the creation of a youthful atmosphere. Here, in Elizabeth Stuart, she has drawn a portrait of a woman as undignified and wearisome as the novelist's heroine of over thirty is doomed to be. There is some pathos about Elizabeth's sudden delivery from an atmosphere of cramping poverty, but her reaction to ease and wealth is not very convincing. Her gift of music never strikes the reader as being part of herself. She lays it down too suddenly, once her desire for a lover is balked, and this although she is supposed to be devoted to her art. Miss Syrett is too anxious to save her characters the trouble of revealing themselves in word or deed, and spends far too much time in describing them, a habit which makes for staleness.

\* \* \*

**The Man Who was London.** By J. KILMENY KEITH. (Collins. 7s. 6d.)

It is a pity that Miss Keith, whose poems are already known, will have to write a second novel before her power over that form can be judged. By hiding behind the numerous bars of a detective story she evades many responsibilities. By making her Epilogue the beginning of a new story she would have found more freedom. The necessary murder is committed by a young doctor, a Socialist visionary, who stabs his fiancée's guardian, a millionaire who is about to cause universal suffering by a gigantic deal in wheat. The murder takes place in a country house, rich in tradition, and Miss Keith's frequent allusions to the hostile spirits of the old place, and their scorn of the wealthy moderns there assembled, tend to digress too much from the unravelling of the mystery, suggesting psychic hypotheses which are not required. The Epilogue shows us the doctor in voluntary banishment in Lithuania, where he ministers to a desolate population, and it is only in reading those concluding pages that one feels any interest in the pathology of his war-time experiences, and the crime to which these experiences had led him.

\* \* \*

**They Want Their Wages.** By HARRY COLINDALE. (Faber & Gwyer. 7s. 6d.)

"We want our wages," was the reply of the Yorkshire steel-workers who were suddenly condemned to lose their wages in order that a lofty scheme of workers' control might be put into practice. This would not have happened had the fortune of the Steel King not fallen to his brother, Michael Doyle, a Quixotic idealist whose Celtic descent

inspired him to Celtic deeds in the sphere of industrial reform. Opposed to him is the less adventurous figure of the young "benevolent despot" type of employer, whose subdued altruism, as expressed in profit-sharing, is hateful to Michael. The closing scenes, in which Michael hopes to secure submission from the capitalists whom he has locked out of his Highland castle on a lonely island, are not without humour. The story abounds in naïveté and a very old-fashioned moral rhetoric, and the author is awkward in approaching his women characters, but there are the atoning merits of sincerity and a real desire to talk about an impersonal problem.

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

**Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered.—The Odyssey Rendered into English Verse.—Erewhon Revisited.—The Way of All Flesh.** By SAMUEL BUTLER. (Cape. 21s. each.)

These are Vols. 14 to 17 of the "Shrewsbury Edition of Samuel Butler's Works," which will be complete in twenty volumes. The first two books are characteristic of Butler's ingenious, amusing, and irritating crankiness. His edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets is probably less well known than many of his other "critical" works. His Napoleonic methods as an emendator are admirably shown by Sonnet 23. There the tenth line in the Quarto runs—

"More than that tongue that more hath more express'd."

The difficulty is great and obvious. Butler cuts the knot by reading—

"More than that tongue that less hath more express'd."

\* \* \*

**The Diplomatic Relations of Great Britain and the United States.** By R. B. MOWAT. (Arnold. 16s.)

Professor Mowat's books on diplomatic history are well known for their careful learning. In this book he traces in great detail the relations between Great Britain and the United States between 1782 and 1914. It is, as he says, the record of the gradual and peaceful settlement of a great number of difficulties and disagreements. The whole book forms a very valuable study in the history of foreign policy.

\* \* \*

**The Consumers' Co-operative Movement in Germany.** By DR. THEODOR CASSAU. Translated from the German by J. F. MILLS. (Fisher Unwin. 7s. 6d.)

This book will be welcomed by all students of Consumers' Co-operation. The German is the only Continental movement which can compare in efficiency and success with our own, but hitherto there has been no adequate account of it. Dr. Cassau's book is admirable, being packed with facts which give all the information required in a clear and concise manner. Its only fault is the absence of an index. It deserves to be studied by all who are interested in the development of our own movement.

\* \* \*

**The Illustrated Australian Encyclopædia.** Edited by A. WILBERFORCE JOSE and HERBERT J. CARTER.—Vol. I. A to L.A.S. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson; London: Australia House. £2 10s.)

This substantial volume forms the first half of what promises to be a standard work of reference on all matters relating to Australia, for its contents fully justify its title. Many of the subjects are treated at considerable length, the article on Aboriginal Languages, for instance, extending to twenty-seven columns, and that on Aborigines to forty columns. Political thinkers and social reformers will be interested in such articles as those on Constitutions, State and Federal; Cost of Living; Immigration Restriction; Imperial Conferences; and Land Legislation, Tenure, and Taxation. The Chronological Table, recording the most important events from 1606 to 1924, is likely to be especially useful. The devotee of sport will revel in the sections on Cricket and Football, the former containing complete lists of the fifteen teams which have visited England and of all the English teams which have visited Australia. The lover of natural history will find numerous articles on animals, fishes, and insects, with some beautiful coloured plates besides illustrations in the text. The illustrations, indeed, form a valuable feature of the volume. The publishers state that the work has been wholly produced in Australia, and it reflects the greatest credit on all concerned.





## FINANCIAL SECTION

## THE WEEK IN THE CITY

GILT-EDGED STOCKS—NEW ISSUES—RUBBER—MEXICAN EAGLE.

THE rise in Bank rate, as we illustrated last week by text and table, had been very largely discounted in the gilt-edged market. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that the index number of gilt-edged securities, according to the figures of the INVESTORS' CHRONICLE, should be slightly lower at the end of November, viz., 100.2 against 100.5 at the end of October. This compares with 102.5 on November 30th, 1924, when Bank rate was also 4 per cent., and proves beyond question that what the Stock Exchange hates, as much as idleness, is uncertainty in the monetary outlook. The gilt-edged market is still uneasy about the exchanges, even on a 5 per cent. Bank rate, and there is little business passing. Indeed, the monetary position points to the market being distinctly quiet for the rest of the year, and perhaps easier. While new issues continue to attract money, the rubber market booms, and the banks call in loans for the annual window-dressing, the steady trickle of sales of gilt-edged securities, which is the feature to-day, may continue.

In due course the Stock Exchange, like the business community, may feel the effects of dearer money in the slowing down of activity. This does not mean that when a really good thing comes along, it will not be bought. The German potash loan was a case in point. On the evening before the day of issue a heavy over-subscription of these £5,000,000 Seven per cent. Bonds at 94½ per cent. was assured. The lists were closed at 9.15 a.m. the next day with subscriptions over fourteen times the amount of issue. We knew this issue to be good, and we prepared readers of THE NATION for it some ten days in advance, but hundreds of people must have been disappointed who decided to apply on reading the terms of issue in their papers on Tuesday morning. It is a pity that the lists of the really good issues should be closed as soon as the banks open. The disappointed must take comfort in the thought that other attractions will follow. There is, for example, an issue pending on behalf of an important textile group in Germany, and a second mortgage debenture issue by the Dunlop Rubber Company—possibly 6 per cent. at 98—which has to pay for its acquisition of Charles Macintosh & Co. and other rubber-manufacturing firms. There is also to be a £4,000,000 Debenture issue by the Cunard Steamship Company, which will pay off its existing £4,000,000 7 per cent. debenture stock. This will probably take the form of a 5 per cent. Mortgage debenture, issued at about 98, secured specifically upon the Cunard ships as well as by a floating charge on the whole of the company's assets. This, of course, is a "gilt-edged" security, and compares favourably with the 5 per cent. and 5½ per cent. debenture stocks of the P. & O. (standing at 98½ and 101½ respectively), which are secured only by a floating charge, and have about £1½ millions of 3½ per cent. debenture stock "in front."

In passing, we may observe that while the potash loan indirectly benefits this country by assisting a large German industry, the coming German textile loan is of direct advantage. The German textile companies to whom the loan is made are regular customers of this country, buying machinery, raw materials, such as jute, hemp, flax, and cotton, and also yarns and cotton piece goods. These companies will spend on purchases in the English market in 1926 much more than the amount borrowed. The loan, in other words, is not all required for fixed capital, but for financing ordinary trade purchases. In other words, we are quickly getting back, now that the

embargo is raised, to our ordinary business of financing our European customers.

It is difficult to depress the rubber share market. Dealers attempted to do so by quoting wider prices on Tuesday morning, but it had no more than momentary effect. The index number of rubber shares reached a new record with 235.4 at the end of November, a rise of 141.3 points above the figure for August 31st, 1924, when the upward movement started. A 5 per cent. Bank rate and the monetary stringency of the end of the year approaching may yet be the signal for heavy profit-taking to begin, but sales have so far been quickly absorbed. The announcement of 100 per cent. "standard" production for the restricting areas on February 1st has had no depressing effect upon the market. Production can be no higher than what labour permits. Wild forecasts have been put forward of the probable shortage of rubber this year and next. A firm of Mincing Lane brokers, for example, has estimated a shortage of not less than 72,000 tons this year, and a further shortage of 48,000 tons in 1926. We adhere to the estimate given in THE NATION of a shortage of 30,667 tons this year, which was based upon figures given by Mr. Eric Miller at the general meeting of Messrs. Harrisons & Crosfield, of shipments of 500,000 tons. An estimate of 600,000 tons for production in 1926 is probably optimistic, but not impossible. Consumption in 1926 is put by the Mincing Lane enthusiasts at 620,000 tons, but nothing is so dangerous as estimating the rate of increase in such articles of semi-luxury as motor-cars. The price of rubber thus ultimately depends upon business conditions in the United States. It is significant that there is yet no sign of any break in American prosperity, and that American manufacturers have been buying rubber now on the prospect of a squeeze in supplies next year. The experts therefore think that the present level of rubber prices should be maintained for some time, but that by the end of next year production may catch up with demand.

Oil shares are quieter, as might be expected in the absence of any firm upward movement in oil prices, but it is noticeable that Mexican Eagle has been a good market at the higher level of 19s. We are tempted to recommend old holders of Mexican Eagle shares to average, not because of any change in the oil situation generally, but because of the outlook in Mexico. As political conditions become more stable there will be greater activity in the oil fields, and it will be strange if the Mexican Eagle, when it intensifies its drilling campaign, does not discover more oil. Already, in an oil field called Cerro Viego, which it owns jointly with the Mexican Petroleum Company, the Company has brought in a gusher flowing 21,000 barrels a day. That may turn to salt water quickly if it is a "stripper," but it shows what might happen when the Company decides to spend more money in exploratory drilling. An important point for shareholders to seize is that the Mexican Eagle has a strong financial position, with its assets written down by about 47 per cent. The last balance-sheet showed a surplus of floating assets of about £6,000,000 over all liabilities (including both preference issues). About £6,750,000 was then in British Government securities, cash, and stocks of oil. The fixed assets are given as £6,400,000, as against an original capital sum of £12,000,000. Finally, there are reserve funds amounting to £3,300,000. When the turn in the oil fields does come, the rise in Mexican Eagle shares will be rapid, for profits should go to shareholders and should not be required for any further "writing down" of assets.



